Spacedogs and Hannigram Prompts, Flash Fics, and Other Quirky (Quick and Dirty) Little One-Shots

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by AGlassRoseNeverFades

Summary

~~Absurdly, irrationally long new title is absurdly and irrationally long, and also new. But also super descriptive!~~

This prompt collection is now complete, with exception to any possible future sequels to stories already posted to it. All other future prompt fics will now be posted to a different collection that I feel I've organized a bit better for my own convenience and ease. 😅

Notes

Written for an anon who requested this *ages* ago and has probably long since forgotten by now, whoops. Based on one of the prompts from this post.

See the end of the work for more notes

Rooftops (spacedogs)

Night after night, Nigel makes the climb up the stairs of his shitty new apartment building, goes out on the roof, and lights up a cigarette. Used to be, he would come up here seeking a quiet place to look up at the sky and think. (Not to sulk, he would tell himself. Men like Nigel don't sulk. They *brood.*) Now though, he's got other interests on his mind.

There's another figure, just a few buildings away, who comes out on clear enough nights to gaze up at the stars just like Nigel, although now Nigel's eyes stray far more often over to that distant rooftop, despite there not being much to see in the dark. Nigel always makes sure he's up here, waiting, just as the light of day begins to fade so he can catch a good glimpse of the other man before it becomes too dark to see. They're close enough for Nigel to tell that it is a man, though he can't make out much more than that. He's thought a couple of times about bringing up a pair of binoculars so he can get a better look, but he always talks himself out of it in the end. Even he isn't that much of a creep.

Nigel lives for those glimpses every evening, and for the metallic glint of the telescope the man carries up with him when it becomes too dark for Nigel to see anything else.

He tried waving once, but the other either didn't notice or chose to ignore him, so he had stopped, feeling foolish. His curiosity hasn't wavered regardless. He finds himself thinking about the mysterious stranger more than he would ever admit to anyone out loud. Out of all the rooftops in the city, this guy has to show up night after night on top of one within view of Nigel's building. It feels like a sign, like fate.

Most men perhaps would give up on believing in signs and destiny after already having their hearts broken once. Nigel is not most other men, however. Hope is what makes up the core of his being, as surprising as that may be to people who don't know him very well. It's not in his nature to give up easily, and he is nothing if not a dauntless romantic.

Tonight is the night, he decides on a whim after weeks of thinking about it. He can't content himself with just watching any longer. He needs to meet this man.

Stubbing out his cigarette after one last drag, Nigel stands up and stretches, then makes his way to the edge of the building. The buildings between here and there are all close enough that he can easily make jumps where he needs to and climb where he can't, but he needs to do it now while there's still enough daylight to see by. His destiny hasn't appeared outside yet, always coming out at the same precise moment every evening when he has just enough time in the fading light of dusk to set up everything that he needs. Nigel will feel like a real ass if this happens to be the one night the guy fails to show up, but there's no backing out for Nigel once his mind is made up. He'll just have to go for it and hope for the best.

He clears the first two buildings just fine, making excellent time. Not too shabby for a guy in his forties who drinks like a fish and smokes like a chimney every day. The last jump is the trickiest. Nigel is confident he can make it, but he'll need a good running start.

He backs up a bit and makes the leap, only to overshoot his goal by a couple of feet. He makes it to the final rooftop just fine, but his foot catches right in the center of a potted plant, causing him to topple over and fall flat on his ass.

“That wasn’t a smart idea. Very dangerous. You could have been hurt,” says a flat, unfamiliar voice, and Nigel groans aloud, realizing exactly who it must be. Another beat, and then, “Are you hurt?”

“Just a bruised fuckin’ ego,” Nigel grumbles, looking up finally to face the last person he ever wanted to see him like this.

And what a face it is. Pale, creamy skin, plush pink lips, a headful of gorgeous brown curls that shine redly under the last rays of the sun, and a set of big, doe-like, baby blue eyes, all coming together under the fading light of twilight to give the beautiful creature standing above him an ethereal, almost unearthly appearance.

“Well, *fuck me,”* says Nigel under his breath without really thinking about it.

“I just met you.”

Nigel snorts. “Smartass, huh? Alright, I can work with that. Help me up, will you, gorgeous?” Nigel asks, offering up his hand.

The other man blinks confusedly, as if he can’t understand why Nigel would call him that, but he transfers the blanket he’s still holding in both arms over to just one and grasps Nigel’s hand with the other to help him stand.

Nigel can’t quite keep the smirk off his face, victorious now to find them both standing so close, their faces mere inches from each other, and still grasping each other’s hands.

At least until the other lets it go and turns back around to finish laying out his blanket and setting up the rest of his stuff like Nigel isn’t even there. The older man has to bury his disappointment, remind himself that not everything can always fall together perfectly the way it does in those Harlequin romance novels Nigel *definitely doesn’t read* and that he is technically an intruder here in the other man’s space. Hell, he’s lucky the guy didn’t just assume off the bat that Nigel is the world’s most inept cat burglar, now that he thinks about it.

Nigel clears his throat awkwardly. “You come out here a lot, don’t you? I mean, I’ve noticed you over here a couple of times,” he says casually. “I live at that building over there,” he adds, pointing.

“I know,” says the younger man. “You’ve been coming out to the roof every night for almost a month.” Nigel is somewhere between embarrassed and pleased to realize he was noticed after all. “You like to stargaze too, right?” asks the other, his voice for the first time carrying a note of excitement to it instead of the same flat tone.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Nigel says, gazing down intently right at the other man. He is rewarded with a beaming, brilliant smile that outshines every damn star in the sky, in his mind.

“You know you’d be able to see them better if you had a telescope, or binoculars even. They work probably about as well as a telescope in the city, to be honest.”

“I’ve thought about bringing a pair up with me a couple of times,” Nigel admits, though he doesn’t say it’s because he wanted to get a better look at *him.*

“So what’s your favorite star?” the other asks, eager as a puppy now.

Nigel blinks, put on the spot, and blurts out the first thing that comes to mind. “Dog star.”

“Sirius,” says the younger man with a nod. “That’s a fairly popular one. It’s the brightest star we can see at night, both because of its intrinsic luminosity and its proximity to our planet. Did you know it’s actually not just one star, but two?” Nigel starts to shake his head, but the other continues to plow on through before he’s even finished. “Their distance from each other varies, usually somewhere between around 8.2 and 31.5 AU, but to the naked eye they just appear as one star. They’re part of the Canis Major system, which is Latin for ‘greater dog’ of course, though I’m sure you probably knew all that. There are a few different dogs that it might be named for in Greek mythology, although we’re not really sure which one, and… um…” He trails off finally, appearing awkward and shy though he had been nothing but bright-eyed and enthusiastic just a moment before. “And, um, I’m probably talking too much now. I do that sometimes when I’m really interested in something.”

“That’s more than fine by me, darling,” says Nigel, more enamored with the kid’s enthusiasm than he is interested in the words themselves. He has a face Nigel could drink in the sight of and a voice he could listen to for hours.

“My name is Adam,” the kid says, blushing lightly. “Not gorgeous or darling.”

“I’ll keep that in mind then, gorgeous,” says Nigel with a wink. *“Adam,”* he adds softly, as though in having the right to say it he has been bestowed a precious gift. “Mine’s Nigel.” He joins Adam on the blanket then, sitting cross-legged so he no longer has to look down at him to speak. Adam scoots over enough to allow him room, but otherwise doesn’t move, and doesn’t complain about Nigel joining him there on the ground without asking.

“Are you…” Adam starts to ask, brows furrowing. “Is this flirting, Nigel? Are we flirting right now?”

“God, I sure fuckin’ hope so, darling,” says Nigel. “I didn’t come this close to breaking my neck tonight just to look at the stars, you know.”

“Oh,” Adam states simply. Smiling slightly, he glances down and away to the side a bit and says, “Okay. Good.” Scooting a bit closer again, he turns his body partway back towards the telescope. “Do you want to stay and look at the stars with me, Nigel?”

“I do, angel.” *Every fuckin’ night for the rest of our lives if you’ll let me.* “I do.”

Puppy (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

> @dandelionswishes70 prompts: *Yea space dog prompts! If you do A/B/O pregnant Adam and nervous Nigel. If not Adam/Nigel adopting kid or animal. :)*
>
> I'm not quite ready to write a kid!fic yet, so adopting an animal it is!
>
> (Side note: All spacedog prompts do not necessarily take place in the same universe, so they can easily be read as standalones. I'll let you know if anything in particular reads best as a continuation of a previous story. ^_^)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Adam, what the fuck is that?"

'That' makes an excitable yipping noise, tongue lolling happily out of its mouth as Adam sits cross-legged on the floor with it and scratches it along its sides. "It's a puppy, Nigel."

The very bad man from Bucharest makes an effort not to sigh heavily in frustration. It's his own fault after all for asking a question with such an obvious literal answer. "I know that it's a puppy, darling."

"Then why did you ask?"

"I meant, what is a puppy doing in our apartment, angel?"

"Oh. I found her outside," Adam answers simply.

"Oh yeah?" Nigel asks, offering gentle encouragement for his lover to elaborate, taking his jacket off finally and laying it on the arm of the couch while he sits. The puppy barks, wiggling its little butt and practically hopping as it overexcitedly sprints over to the newcomer and rests its little paws on Nigel's shin. Hesitantly, Nigel reaches down to let it sniff at his hand and lick between his fingers.

"She was filthy when I found her and half-starved. You can almost see the shape of her ribs through her fur if you look closely enough. I think she was probably surviving off of scraps from people at the park. I gave her a bath and fed her some warm milk, but we'll need to take her to a vet to make sure she isn't malnourished and get her all of her shots. I also downloaded some books on housebreaking and puppy training, and compiled a list of everything we'll need to get from the pet store. Food obviously, a bed, toys, training pads—"

Nigel is normally content to let Adam ramble on as long as he wants and is happy to listen, but this time he decides it would be wiser to interrupt before he gets too far going. "Darling,

keeping a puppy is a lot of work. Lots of messes to clean up after too."

"I know. That's what the training pads are for." Nigel doesn't point out that training pads won't help with everything. He's sure Adam already knows and has looked up a dozen solutions for every possible scenario. One glance into those wide, bright baby-blues and he's sunk—he's always had trouble telling Adam 'no' in anything, and this time is no exception. They're just going to have to keep the damn thing. There are worse fates than this. He's always liked dogs anyway.

"Alright. Call the damn vet and I'll take her when it's time."

"I already booked the appointment online," says Adam. Of course he did. "I also called out from work tomorrow so I can go with you." Nigel raises both eyebrows at that, it only hitting him fully now just how important this must be to him. He knows how difficult it is for Adam to deviate from his routine for anything, and especially how anxious it makes him feel to get on the phone with anyone about something like this.

The puppy whines and tries to climb Nigel's leg. The bad man from Bucharest picks her up and coddles her against his chest, scratching behind her ear. "Vet's gonna probably want a name to write down when we come in, darling."

"I've been calling her Cassiopeia," Adam says.

'Cassiopeia,' Nigel mouths silently with a slight frown, not liking the idea of having to use so many syllables every time he wants to call for the dog to *'come here'* or *'sit.'*

"Cass," he says aloud. The dog yips out a couple of barks and lets out a short little howl. "How 'bout that. I think she likes it."

Adam smiles and comes to sit on the couch next to Nigel, snuggling up close to the man and reaching out to pat the puppy a couple of times on the head. "Thank you," he says softly and kisses the older man on the cheek. The pup lets out another low warbling whine as if to repeat the words and leans up to lick Nigel on the chin.

Nigel sighs and puts his arm around Adam's shoulders. "The things I put up with for you, darling," he says, though the smile on his face makes it clear it's no great burden to him at all.

Chapter End Notes

I know this one was super short even by flash fic standards, but I can probably be tempted to write more in puppy!verse sometime in the future. ;)

Voivode timestamp (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

It's almost October! Must be time for a mini-sequel to Voivode. :D

For those of you who don't know, this takes place in the same verse as an AU I wrote last year for Halloween, in which Hannibal is *quite literally* Count Dracula, and believe it or not, it's actually *not crack!* I know, crazy, right? xD

Just knowing that fact is probably enough to make it readable as a standalone, but I guarantee it'll make a lot more sense if you read the fic linked above first. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rhys is out on the dance floor, trying to charm some mediocre-looking bloke who'll probably be a mediocre lay as well when he spots him at the bar—pale creamy skin and sexy brown curls, easily the most gorgeous man in the whole club, quite possibly the most gorgeous man Rhys has ever *seen.* How in the hell a beautiful twink like that could still be sitting alone, Rhys has no idea. Maybe it's the drink talking, filling him with more liquid courage than would normally be wise, but he feels compelled to take advantage of that unfathomable oversight on everyone else's part as soon as possible. What else has he got to lose after all?

He ignores the miffed, haughty admonishment of the fellow he was dancing with as he stalks away, making his way to the bar with what he drunkenly imagines to be the confident swagger of a predator who knows exactly what he wants and how to get it.

"Mind if I sit here?" he asks, sidling onto the barstool next to his target. He considers it a victory when the other finally looks over at him and offers in response one finely arched brow.

"Sure. It's a free country, isn't it?" says the other, smirking at his own little joke before raising the tumbler of whiskey in his hand to take another sip.

"American, huh?" asks Rhys. He's always heard Americans find British accents sexy, so he lets his own curl a little more pronouncedly around his words as he speaks. "You here for business or pleasure, love?"

"Bit of both," the American answers, setting his glass down and letting his finger slide in a back-and-forth semicircle around the rim in a manner that seems almost suggestive. "My boyfriend brought me along. He used to live here a long time ago and wanted to check on some old properties."

Rhys doesn't let the mention of a boyfriend deter him, certainly not when the other has seemed fairly open and receptive to his advances so far anyway. "Where's your boyfriend

now, love?" he pushes.

"Not here," the other man answers, smirking again and looking up at Rhys through his long lashes with a dark, hooded gaze. Rhys feels all the blood rushing straight to his dick and his pulse pumping erratically. The other flares his nostrils a bit and licks his lips as though he can *smell it.*

He leans in close then, lips surprisingly cold against Rhys' ear as he whispers, "Want to show me the sights for a bit, or just take me straight home?"

Oh, hell yes, Rhys thinks. He clears his throat. "I'd love to take you back to my flat and show you the sight of my bedroom ceiling," he says, feeling quite clever for coming up with that one on the spot. The other man chuckles as though he thinks it's funny at least, voice taking on a musical quality that makes Rhys feel tingly and spellbound.

"Lead the way then."

*

It's a relatively short walk from the club back to his place, one that nonetheless feels like it's taking far too long as his beautiful companion won't keep his hands to himself, continually draping himself along Rhys' arm or letting his hands wander in light, teasing gropes, always pulling away right as Rhys tries to lean into the touch.

If Rhys were a little less distracted—or a little less drunk—he might notice that nearly every time he does it he's not even looking at Rhys, directing his teasing smile instead to the shadows along dark alley corners, even up towards the rooftops or other places that don't make much sense.

He's so excited and turned on by the time they arrive that it takes a few tries before he finally succeeds in fumbling the key into the lock. As soon as he walks forward and crosses the threshold though, the touches stop. His companion stands just outside the doorframe, biting his lip now in a manner that looks almost charmingly nervous.

"Don't tell me you're feeling shy now, love. Come on in." The man looks back up at him, and his coquettish smile returns as he steps inside.

Almost immediately after Rhys shuts the door, the man crowds him against it, hands on either sides of his shoulders caging him in without touching him, and leans in to sniff along the line of his throat. It is quite possibly the weirdest and most erotic thing to ever happen to him in his life.

He leans forward for a kiss when the man pulls back far enough, only to be stopped by a finger to his lips and a teasing, "Pour me a drink first."

"Ooh, demanding, are we?" Rhys asks, bolstered by the cheeky grin he gets in response. "I like that. One bottle of brew coming up then."

The man shrugs off his dark jacket and leaves it on the back of the sofa, then follows him into the kitchen, boosting himself up to sit on the countertop with a feline grace that makes Rhys swallow dryly just imagining all the ways he can probably bend and twist in the bedroom.

"'Fraid this is all I've got at the mo," he says as he passes one of his last bottles to his guest.

"Not my drink of choice, but it'll do for now," says his guest with a wink, slouching back against the cabinets and letting his heel tap soundlessly against the one behind his foot. "Do you live here alone?"

"Yeah. Listen, um, not to be rude or anything, but could we maybe skip the small talk bit and get to the fun taking-our-clothes-off bit instead?"

"Impatient, are we?" the beautiful stranger says—*did he already tell him his name and Rhys just forgot it? Fuck it, he's not gonna risk bollixing this up now by asking him*—and slides elegantly off the counter, untucking his burgundy silk shirt from his dark jeans as he does so. "How's this?" he asks, nimble fingers trailing his own torso and undoing each of the buttons from the collar down as they go.

Rhys nods, mouth dry again. "Yeah, that'll do for a start." He quickly shucks off his own shirt over his head and surges forward to finally claim those plush lips he's been staring at all night.

A loud knock at the door ruins that, startling him and causing his companion to lean away and look towards the entrance before Rhys has even gotten halfway to him. It would almost be comical if it wasn't frustrating as hell.

"Just ignore it," Rhys implores, leaning close to try again. "Whoever it is'll think no one's home and probably piss off." As if just to prove him wrong, the knocking starts up again, this time louder and more insistent.

"You should probably get that," his companion says, leaning back again with a mischievous smirk and raising the bottle of ale to take a long swig.

Rhys curses. "All right, just wait right here one minute. I'll be *right* back." He all but stomps back into the den. He doesn't care if it's the bloody Queen calling at this late hour, he'll tell them right where they can stick it if they don't shove off straight away.

Well, Rhys thinks, he has no idea who the tall, broad-shouldered man standing before him is, but it's definitely not the bloody Queen or anyone else he would recognize, and odd enough looking that Rhys is certain he *would* recognize him if he had ever seen him before. "Good evening," the man says pleasantly, but there's a glint of *something* behind his eyes that makes Rhys swallow a bit nervously.

"Who the hell are you?" he asks brusquely to mask his unease.

"Oh, that's my boyfriend," says a voice right beside him, and Rhys nearly jumps again. He hadn't heard his companion follow him. The beautiful man slouches against Rhys' side, one

arm draped around his shoulders, staring straight into his eyes as he says, ***"You should let him in."***

"Oh," says Rhys, his anxiety and fear slipping away as he stares into those icy blue eyes, leaving only an empty, floating feeling in its wake. "Sure. Right. Come on in, mate," he adds dreamily, turning his head back to the doorway again.

"Thank you," says the newcomer, bowing his head graciously as he steps inside and closes the door softly behind him. He turns to the other then, eyes sweeping over the partial state of undress, and says something in a language Rhys doesn't understand, his accent more noticeable and pronounced as he speaks. *"Te joci cu mâncarea acum, dragul meu?"*

"Uite cine vorbește," says the other in a slower, more halting tongue, another playful smile on his lips. The broad-shouldered man makes a 'carry on' gesture with his hand then, and the other turns his attention back to Rhys. ***"Sit down,"*** he says.

Rhys, still floaty and dreamy, hastens to comply and stumbles backward until his shins hit the sofa, dropping down onto it like an obedient child. The other man follows and straddles his lap, wrapping both arms around Rhys' shoulders. He should be more excited this night is *finally* going in the direction he wanted, but all he can feel through the fog in his brain is a dull thrum of fear as his one night stand's boyfriend begins stalking around the couch in a slow circle with an intense, hungry gaze.

"It's okay," says the other, leaning down to whisper in Rhys' ear. *"He likes to watch."*

Feeling encouraged by this, Rhys reaches for the back of his neck to try and tug him closer. His lips hover over Rhys' own, but every time Rhys tries to go in for the kiss, the other man pulls back, laughing, until Rhys whines low in his throat.

"Rather inconsiderate to tease him so, my dear," the strange foreign man says lightly from behind the sofa. Rhys' almost-lover glances up at the man, one eyebrow quirked and a challenging light in his eyes, before he suddenly and without warning swoops in to crash his lips finally against Rhys' own and grinds down on his hips.

Rhys moans into the kiss and shuts his eyes, bucking up and enjoying the hot slide of another tongue against his own as he grabs fistfuls of the other man's shirt and tries to push it out of the way so his hands can slide over bare skin.

A sharp, painful tug at his hair yanks his head back suddenly, and he finds himself looking up at the third man upside down, his eyes flashing coldly. "On the other hand, it is also unforgivably rude to knowingly invite another man's lover to bed."

The man in his lap *tsks* and the hand in his hair loosens just enough to allow Rhys to turn his attention back to him. "Ooh, so sorry, love," he says in brief imitation of Rhys' own accent. "Turns out he's not too eager to share me after all."

Dazedly, Rhys notices something seems off about his smile now, as if his teeth don't fit in it quite the same as they did a moment before, but he has no time to figure out how or react to it

before the man suddenly lunges forward and he can *feel* the difference as they tear into his throat.

Rhys screams, but instead of real sound all that comes up is the bubbling gurgle of blood.

*

It is difficult to hide the swell of pride he feels in his beloved as Will finishes and pulls back, licking blood from his lips though much more of it seems to have dribbled down his chin and over his exposed chest and stomach. *Ah, to be young again,* and full of such zeal for the kill. The former count remembers when he himself was newly turned and delighted in testing all the limits of his newfound powers.

“For a moment, I thought you were truly going to let him have his way with you first,” he says.

Will looks up at him, expression full of mischief and mirth once again. “Did you want me to?” he asks. He grins at the rough, possessive hand that fists into his curls at the cheeky response. “Or could it be you were feeling jealous, my dear Doctor Lecter?”

His beautiful boy still calls him by the name he introduced himself as when they met, the alias he still uses currently back in America, though now that he knows the truth it is at times such as these almost more of a running joke between them. The man who calls himself Hannibal these days cannot say that he minds. It has been a long time since he was called by another, and he does so love the way Will’s accent wraps around its syllables when he speaks, especially when he says it in the throes of ecstasy and passion. In fact, Hannibal decides, he would very much like to hear it now.

“Perhaps you need a reminder to whom you truly belong,” he growls, lifting Will up bodily from the dead man’s lap and slamming him against the far opposite wall faster than any human eye can see. The younger man clings and wraps his legs around his waist, moaning as Hannibal laps the blood from his chin and kisses him filthily with the taste of it still sweet on his tongue.

“Just look at you,” Hannibal says, hotly eyeing the blood splashed over his lover’s smooth chest and stomach. “What a fine mess you’ve made. I wonder that you managed to get any of it down your throat at all.”

“I got enough,” Will says, leaning forward to nip at his earlobe. With falsely muttered innocence he adds, “I didn’t want *you* to go hungry afterwards though.”

Hannibal *snarls* at the insinuation, in awe that this depraved little minx in his arms could be the same boy who once blushed so prettily under Hannibal’s touch. His only recourse of action is to take the creature up on his offer, bending so he can lave his tongue over the splashes of warm liquid streaked across his skin. He may not blush the way he used to, but his boy still makes such sweet sounds for every pass of his tongue and sharp nip of his teeth, his fingers digging painfully into his lover’s scalp with the kind of force that would leave marks on a human but which Hannibal hardly notices.

It takes every ounce of willpower he possesses not to tear Will's clothing from him in shreds this time—as he is wont to do on occasion, taking pleasure in both the decadence of the act and in the opportunity to replace his garments with even finer things later—and instead rip it all away still whole and intact. It would not do to return to the abbey later tonight with Will completely naked, or worse, bedecked in something from his sordid victim's unfashionable wardrobe. He won't allow it.

Wetting his fingers with his saliva, he prepares his lover quickly to the sweet symphony of Will's moans while he undoes his own belt and trousers with the other hand.

The two of them groan together into each other's mouths as Hannibal slides himself inside at last. Will clings to him tightly, biting and kissing along Hannibal's throat with every thrust. He looks up over the man's shoulder and feels his skin get even hotter and tighter when his eyes meet the sightless ones of the corpse on the sofa.

It wasn't so long ago when something like this would have been unthinkable and disturbing to Will, before Hannibal came into his life and freed him to truly live and feel with abandon. Now he no longer feels the need to hide his true self or hold onto grey, shaky morals that always felt like they could at any moment slip right through his fingers. He has no humanity to hold onto any longer. They are not human. They are monsters. *They are gods.*

Hannibal comes with a quiet grunt and Will follows shortly after, splashing hotly onto his own stomach.

When Hannibal bends to lap the residue from his stomach and his aching hole, Will keens and runs his fingers softly through the man's hair. Hannibal lowers him gently to the floor and brushes a kiss over his knuckles. This is who they are, enflamed passion and adoring tenderness for one another in the same breath, cold indifference or outright disdain for anyone else. No one else in the world matters or even compares.

*

"But enough about me and my latest achievements for now," says Doctor Chilton over his third glass of Chardonnay. "You two have yet to tell me anything about your little holiday. Tell me, how was England?"

"Wet," answers Will simply, taking another sip of his wine. Hannibal smirks at him over Chilton's shoulder as he stands to pour more wine into their guest's glass.

"It was quite an enjoyable trip," he answers more thoroughly for both of them. "Much has changed since I was there last."

"Ah yes, that gaudy London Eye," Chilton sniffs disdainfully.

"And one or two other interesting sights and innovations besides," Hannibal replies, and Will smirks unseen into his own glass. The last time his lover had been to England was quite long ago indeed, when women still wore long hoop skirts and people commonly traveled by steam train and horse-drawn carriage. He wonders if Hannibal is ever thrown by how much

technology has changed over the centuries, and whether or not it will be the same for him, what marvelous inventions no one has even dreamed of yet that he will one day live to see.

The conversation turns inevitably back to Chilton's own mediocre accomplishments and anecdotes. If Will didn't dislike the man before already, he certainly would now after being bored to tears for the past hour and a half. He asked Hannibal once why they keep allowing this dull, irritating man to live, let alone continue inviting him back to their table, and he had explained simply that Chilton would be useful to keep around should the FBI ever come too close to identifying the Ripper. So, they continue putting up with the man's presence. For now.

"For the main course," Hannibal says, returning from the kitchen, "a dish loosely inspired by our vacation—a simple blood pudding, to be followed with trifle for dessert."

"I know well by now nothing is ever really 'simple' about your cooking, Hannibal," Chilton chortles before he takes the first bite.

This is easily the most entertaining part of the night for both of them. Will carefully maintains a straight face as Chilton's eyes flutter shut and he makes a soft satisfied noise around his fork.

"Excellent as always, Hannibal. I expected nothing less." Hannibal bows his head graciously at the compliment before taking his first bite, and Will follows suit. It is still a little difficult for him to swallow, though Hannibal assures him he will regain a tolerance for human foods slowly over time. This dish is helped at least with a healthy portion of the one ingredient Will can truly say he needs and enjoys, so it's a little easier than some of the others he's had to stomach in front of Hannibal's other dinner guests before.

After Chilton leaves, Hannibal shuts the door behind him and Will is on him in an instant.

"I'm starving," he says, leaning up to kiss Hannibal sweetly on the mouth. "Let's go out."

"We just ate," Hannibal says, smirking, and Will punches him lightly on the arm with narrowed eyes. "You are insatiable, my dear."

"And whose fault is that now?" Will drawls, stepping backwards and tugging on the other man's tie to pull him along. Hannibal's smile widens. He would have nothing less.

"Lead the way then, *dragu*ț*ule."*

Chapter End Notes

Naturally, Hannibal would start teaching Will Romanian in this verse, wouldn't he? ;)
Their little conversation when Hannibal enters Rhys' flat:

"Playing with your food now, my dear?"
"Look who's talking."

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

> You can thank @levitatingbiscuits for demanding this one! Tis the season for a spooky theme after all. ;)
>
> Inspired by both the original short story by Washington Irving and the Tim Burton film based on it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Long ago in a gorgeous green glen just a few leagues from the shores of the Hudson, there resided a quaint little hamlet called Sleepy Hollow. The people who lived there were well known in those parts for being hospitable and kind, and were all quite friendly and gregarious that autumn when William Graham arrived and moved into the room behind the old schoolhouse, graciously bestowing him gifts and welcoming him right away with open arms as though he were one of their own. They were well pleased to have acquired such a learned individual as their new schoolmaster and made every effort to make him feel right at home, one generous farmer even going so far as to loan the teacher one of his favorite horses so the young man would not have to go everywhere about the village on foot.

To say that Will felt a bit overwhelmed by all the attention, however, would be putting it mildly. He was more accustomed to the manners of people from New York, who were more than happy to ignore one another until they were needed for something. Here, hardly a day would go by that he would not find himself invited to dinner by the parents of one of his pupils or summoned to attend some party or harvest festival or other such thing.

Another man would perhaps be delighted to never have to spend an evening alone without company. Will, unfortunately, was not such a man. He found it all exhausting and hated to be sociable, but generally found it difficult to turn the invitations down as he did not want to seem ungrateful or rude either. Often, just to avoid receiving them altogether, he would quickly pack up his things and flee the schoolhouse—*his own residence*—as soon as the town bells rang in the afternoon before any of his students could stop him to chat. That rapidly gained him the reputation of being a rather eccentric little fellow, which was still politer than some of the things people used to call him further up north.

On those days Will could make good his escape, he liked to meander about in the forest, taking in all the beautiful sights and smells of nature he had missed during his years in the city. *This,* after all, was one of the reasons he had left the police force and retired to the country, where he had hoped in vain to be left alone outside of the hours of his work schedule.

He had one favorite spot in the woods that most people seemed to avoid due to some silly local superstition surrounding its origins—a gnarled and decrepit-looking old elm tree that seemed to have died long ago and yet had not fallen. Most would think it ugly but Will found it stunning. He would bring a book or two with him and read under the shade it offered, leaning against its trunk. Curiously absent of most animal or bird sounds, to fill the silence he would sometimes rehearse his lessons for the following morning or recite poetry, and occasionally even sang a few hymns until he became too self-conscious to continue.

He hated to admit it to himself, but at times such as these he would sometimes think of the townsfolk's superstitious tales regarding the tree and the cannibalistic Hessian supposedly buried underneath it, and feel himself grow slowly more disquieted. There were times he felt certain he was being watched, only to look up from his book and find no one else present. If he were singing, his voice would slowly taper off and trail to no more than a whisper as he neared the end of his song, unable to shake the eerie conviction that someone else was listening. Once as it was nearing dark and he had not returned home yet, he found himself starting to drift off against the tree's trunk into a light doze, only to startle awake suddenly at the feeling of what he was certain had been a gust of hot breath against the nape of his neck.

Later in the safety of his quarters, he would always scoff and curse his own imagination for playing him the fool, ashamed that as a man of science and learning he had still allowed himself to fall prey to baseless, unfounded fears. Yet he never did tarry long too close to dusk at the tree again, though he still returned there day after day, continually drawn to the spot and determined to overcome his irrational worries.

Distracted by his own musings one afternoon, he was caught unawares when one of the household servants of the Bloom family showed up at his door as the final bells rang to invite him to a "merry-making harvest frolic" at their farmhold. Will, shuddering internally at the thought of going to an event where most of the town would be in attendance, nonetheless felt obligated to accept since they had gone to all the trouble and the servant had come out this far just to tell him.

So it was that he found himself later that evening in the center of the largest and jolliest party the town had thrown yet, surrounded on all sides by jovial old men who enjoyed heartily slapping him on the back as they spoke to him, tittering housewives determined to see him take an interest in one of their daughters so he would settle with them and stay permanently, and children not yet old enough to attend school who had nonetheless heard something about his previous occupation as a police constable and ran about his knees urging him to tell them stories about murders and vagabonds and all manner of such appalling things young children are often so morbidly curious about.

He was grateful and relieved when the town elders took it upon themselves to distract this latter with tales of local legends and ghost stories instead. Better to let their young minds be stuffed with silly ideas about ghouls and goblins, he thought, than to tell them any of the hard truths about what real men might actually do to one another.

Normally at events such as these Bloom's daughter, Alana, would be a welcome balm to his nerves, occupying his attention enough to keep him from feeling too claustrophobic within the crowds of people around, though this also led often to others leaving them alone to their

“wooing” with telling smirks and knowing glances. Alana was the closest he had gotten to gaining an actual friend since his arrival, but he was no more interested in marrying her than she in him. In fact, the only reason he was not in her pleasant company on this evening was that he had not too long ago seen her sneak off behind the barn with one of her kitchen maids, Margot, and had understood immediately that a third party would not be welcomed at this time.

This, unfortunately, left him to fend for himself in other social interactions he would have just as soon avoided, particularly later on in the evening as he was accosted by none other than one of Alana’s many would-be suitors. Brian Zeller was not a bad sort of man really, just a bit brash and hot-tempered as young men often are, but he had picked Will out as an enemy, seeing in him his staunchest rival for the young lady’s affections and having no idea that he was barking up entirely the wrong tree in his conviction. Will, considering it his personal duty not to out his friend’s secret, could not even say anything in his own defense that would dispel the notion and kept his silence throughout.

It was with great relish that he said farewell to his host as soon as enough time had passed that he could do so without offending him, then he clambered onto his horse and began to make his way home.

The shortest path home was over a little wooden bridge and down a country lane that cut through the woods, which Will had never before seen in full darkness. He decided it was terribly beautiful, almost ethereally so, as were the chirps of the crickets and other nighttime sounds the nocturnal animals made. He had to urge the horse to move along slowly, however, lest they trip over a tree root or some other unseen obstacle as a light fog began to roll in.

At first, he felt at peace and unafraid, even humming softly to himself as he rode on. All at once that feeling faded, however, as his voice and the horse’s steps became the only sounds in the wood, all other noises having abruptly stopped. The horse then halted, and yet somehow the *clop-clop-clop* of hooves could still be heard, now seeming to come from directly behind them.

Will turned in his saddle to look and saw nothing, yet the sound continued and even grew steadily louder. *Clop-clop-clop.* Someone else must be on their way back from the party, he thought, and the sound just carried strangely in these woods, yes, that must be it. Unnerved nonetheless, he gripped the reins more tightly and urged his horse forward. The animal immediately began moving at a much quicker speed than he expected, so that he had to calm the creature to encourage a more reasonable pace.

“Easy, Gunpowder.” The horse knickered and crept along slowly forward as though it too were perturbed by the enclosing dark, though the steed was quite old and should by now be quite adapted to these eerie woods where it had lived its entire life. The other steps continued in sync with its own, and Will kept his eyes resolutely forward, determined not to be bothered by it.

Suddenly they ceased, and Will stopped his horse as well, listening for those hooves or any other sounds to return, though none did. Rather than relief, Will felt distinctly ill at ease, awash with the same eerie sensation he sometimes felt at the old elm, like there were eyes

upon him when he should have been alone. Once more, he turned in his saddle to look behind him.

For a moment, he thought he might grow faint at what he saw, for he was certain now that he was no longer alone. Several yards behind but still close enough for him to make out its shape clearly, he saw a lone horse with a lone rider, tall and broad-shouldered, adorned in midnight black with a flowing cape behind. The steed was ebony in color as well so both horse and rider should have been near impossible to see in the dark, yet both were plainly and perfectly visible as though cut from a different material than the rest of the shadows, or permeated somehow with an imperceptible and otherworldly glow. And most damning and monstrous of all was this—*the rider had no head.*

Will gripped the reins tighter and held his breath as he stared, and the rider, though headless, appeared somehow to be gazing just as steadily back at him, motionless, waiting. How could this possibly be real? His mind must be playing some horrible trick in the dark, or else this was a practical joke played by one of the townsfolk surely. It could be Zeller, thinking to scare him off as a means to end their imaginary rivalry for Alana's hand.

"Brian, is that you?" he called out, hoping his voice didn't quaver too much as he forced a sick smile on his features. "Ha ha, very clever. How are you even able to see with that getup on?"

The specter did not answer, but Will was certain it could indeed see him quite clearly, and somehow without a word spoken or even the slightest twitch of a muscle, he was equally certain the thing behind him was supremely amused by the bravado he was putting on and could see right through it as well. With a casual flick of its wrists, the rider began to urge its horse forward at a more quickened pace.

Thoroughly shaken now, Will turned to face forward again and spurred Gunpowder into action. The animal needed little encouragement to race into a full gallop. Behind him, he heard a sound like the crack of a whip, and the beat of hooves now charging after at full speed.

The wind whipped through Will's hair as he spurred Gunpowder to move faster and faster still, guiding the horse to jump over obstacles as best as he could, and still it was not enough. The other caught up within almost the blink of an eye and was now by his side, reaching an arm out as if to grab Will and pull him onto the ungodly steed between its own thighs. Will moved out of its reach barely in time, but doing so cost him his balance on the horse and with a cry of alarm he fell, tumbling and rolling into the brush as Gunpowder continued on rapidly down the road without him.

The headless horseman swung back around, now brandishing a sword. Will scrambled to his feet and bumped into a tree trunk behind him, arms splayed out and holding onto it for purchase. Before he could move from the spot, the fiend threw the sword like a javelin and the blade sank into the wood a mere hairsbreadth from the man's thigh, pinning his cloak to the tree and effectively holding him in place!

The rider hopped down from its horse, which vanished like smoke into thin air now that its master no longer had need for it, as though it had never been there at all. As the demon drew

closer, Will hurried to unclasp the cumbersome garment and shrug his arms out of it before he was well and truly caught. Once freed, he chose a direction at random and ran deeper into the woods in hopes of losing his pursuer.

He ran and ran until his breath burned in his lungs and his legs shook from the exertion. He stopped only when they gave out on him entirely and he fell on hands and knees to the earth once more. He looked up and thought he might weep when he saw his surroundings, for in allowing his feet to carry him on instinct he had followed his old familiar pathway through the woods and landed at the base of the devil's lair itself, that accursed old elm tree!

He heard the crunch of leaves underneath booted feet somewhere behind him and knew he was lost now to the mercy of a creature who had been a monster and a sadist in life. The least he could do was turn to face his supernatural stalker and die with dignity.

As he moved to stand, his hand slid across something smooth and solid. Unable to help it, he glanced down, noticing for the first time that the dirt beneath him was disturbed as though something unholy had climbed up from the ground; it didn't take much to guess what, or rather *who*. Directly beneath his hand was a skull still half-buried in the loosened soil. Having nothing left to lose, Will picked it up as he rose to stand.

"I believe you forgot something here," he stated with shaky confidence as he turned to face his tormentor. The murderous Hessian, Hannibal the Cannibal as he had been known in life, his full true name forgotten and lost to antiquity, stood solemnly and seemed merely to appraise him as he spoke. As though approaching a spooked animal, the ghost began to creep slowly closer.

Will raised the skull high above his head. "Not another step, you devil, or I'll smash it! I swear to God I will!" The ghost halted in its tracks and Will felt a triumphant smirk tug at his lips, exhilarated that he had found something to threaten the being with and perhaps extend his own life by another night.

He felt a twitch in his hand then and looked up. The skull had shifted in his hand as if to look down upon his face, and presently it began chattering its jaw as though attempting to speak. Spooked, Will tossed it to the ground without thinking, whereupon it proceeded to roll until it reached the specter's feet, causing Will to realize the grave mistake he had made.

He could only look on in horror as the thing picked up its own head and set it upon the base of its neck. Immediately tendons and flesh began to sprout from the root and started growing over the bone, the jaw widening as if to let out a silent pained scream. Will watched it all with a hand clamped over his own mouth, aghast.

Once the transformation was complete, Will found himself looking at a man who might have passed for one of the living, with strong, masculine angular features. The man felt his own stubbled jaw with one hand and twisted his neck until Will heard a sharp crack that made him wince, though the man seemed to find whatever feeling it produced most comfortable and pleasant. After a moment, he turned his gaze to Will and gave him a slow, subtle smile that sent shivers creeping along his spine.

Will backed away steadily as the other came striding toward him, until he nearly stumbled over a tree root and fell back against the elm's trunk. The ghost leaned in close and caged him against it between his arms, towering over him. Will wrenched his eyes shut and turned his head away, shuddering.

"Why so afraid, my little songbird?" the Hessian asked, a peculiar lilting accent coloring his words.

"You're going to kill me," Will said, looking up only when the phantom agreed that yes, he would die tonight.

"Why?" he asked brokenly, distressed by the terrible certainty of his own fate.

"Because you are beautiful to me," Hannibal told him, and Will knit his brows at the absurd answer. He sucked in a sharp breath as a gloved hand came up to caress his cheek, but the other shushed him, saying, "You needn't trouble yourself over that now. You have a whole night still to appreciate the gift of life you have been given. Now sing, my songbird. Sing for me until dawn."

"Sing?" Will repeated, perplexed by the strange request. "Sing what?"

"Anything," Hannibal breathed against his ear, causing him to shiver. "The words matter not. I only wish to hear your sweet voice, my lovely boy." To his own astonishment, Will found himself now blushing in earnest from the surprising compliments and whispered endearments. He heard himself obey without even paying attention to the words falling from his own lips. They could have been a gospel hymn or a children's lullaby or even Yankee Doodle Dandy for all that he knew. His demonic admirer was clearly pleased by them all the same, judging by the way he remained too close still to Will's personal space and smiled against his ear.

Those ghostly lips trailed lower, down the side of his jaw and to the crook of his neck, until his voice stuttered, faltering. "Wh-what are you doing?" Hannibal merely shushed him again.

"Keep going," he said against his throat, and Will obeyed. There were hands on him as well though now, groping boldly over his arms and torso, and the lips had taken to suckling and nipping at his throat as if eager to feel the vibrations there, so that it became quite difficult and distracting to continue. Finally he quit altogether, panting, when the hands sought to untuck his shirt from his breeches, stopping them by grasping his own firmly around the other man's wrists. He gasped when he saw Hannibal's eyes overblown with desire he had never felt directed at his own person before, and to his mortal shame felt an empathetic, answering want stir within him to see it. Will considered himself a chaste and moral individual, but certainly never had he expected that to be challenged, and by an amorous ghost of all people!

"You would deny me?" Hannibal asked lightly, an amused smirk adorning that sinful mouth. He reached up to grasp Will's face in both hands, the gloves gone this time. "You would deny yourself for the sake of modesty and morals which no longer matter, when you could allow me to make your last night alive the most pleasurable and fulfilling one of your existence?"

“That’s bold talk,” Will quipped, his heart nonetheless fluttering in his chest as he considered the offer. What else could he have to lose now after all? The phantom seemed to sense that Will’s resolve was wavering, for instead of allowing him to think on it some more he surged forward and captured the young man’s lips with his own.

The ghost kissed and kissed and kissed him, until Will was quite dizzy and breathless with it, and wondered if perhaps he intended to kill him this way by suffocating him. By the time the spirit pulled back enough to allow him some air, Will was faint and clinging to him, certain he would fall otherwise for his legs felt utterly useless beneath him.

“Will you allow me to take care of you now, my darling?” the other asked, softly nuzzling behind his ear. Will nodded, too giddy and light-headed to worry that he had damned himself when the spirit’s grin grew wicked and those hands began undressing him again.

The poor innocent schoolmaster lost track of the hours that passed whilst his virtue was being hopelessly corrupted, mindless to anything save the ecstasy that rippled through him with each wanton new act he learned and the loud blissful cries that were wrung from him again and again and *again,* until his limbs were shaking and sore and he was nearly passed out from exhaustion.

His corrupting demon was, of course, tired not a whit, and looked on smugly when Will finally insisted he could take no more and shakily pulled his garments back on, lest his bared skin prove too much of a temptation for the insatiable villain. He glared almost enviously at the fiend who was already fully clothed again simply by wishing it so.

Sore and aching, Will sat now with his legs splayed out at the base of the tree, head resting back against the trunk. He did not realize he had fallen asleep until he startled awake to the sound of his name being called and saw that it was very nearly dawn, the sky on the eastern horizon just beginning to lighten. It took a moment for him to place the voice as one of the local farmer’s, Crawford’s, he thought. The townspeople must have found his spooked horse and his torn coat and realized he had gone missing somewhere in the woods.

Just as he stood and was about to call out a reply, a spectral hand was clamped tightly over his mouth and an arm around his waist, pulling him flush against his captor’s ethereal body back to chest.

“It is time, my love,” said the specter. Before Will’s very eyes, the most frightful looking vortex appeared to open up within the tree itself, dark and menacing and beyond all comprehension. He began to thrash about instinctively, struggling to get away, but his unearthly lover held him fast.

“Have I not made my intentions clear, beloved? You cannot leave me. You are mine to keep now, forever and always.” With those words, Hannibal the Cannibal crushed his lips against Will’s once more, stifling any terrified screams he might have made as he was helplessly dragged into the portal to spend all eternity with the murderous horseman.

It is a tale still told in hushed tones by the people of Sleepy Hollow to this very day, the night Will Graham mysteriously vanished, leaving all of his worldly possessions behind. None know the truth of what happened, though there is much speculation, for it is said by those

who have borne witness to sightings of the Headless Horseman that the infamous apparition no longer rides alone.

It is also said that sometimes, if you stand just at the base of the twisted elm tree and listen very carefully, you can hear the most lovely voice singing haunting melodies of love and torment, of never-ending perdition and perpetual delight.

The end.

Chapter End Notes

I swear this was supposed to be G-rated! Curses, why can I never write hannigram sans smut?? Dx

From the Sea (hannigram au)

Chapter Summary

Will tells Hannibal his version of their fairy tale, the *true* story.

Chapter Notes

I've been dying for awhile to try my hand at a mermaid AU, and couldn't help but agree with a tumblr post I saw sometime ago which pointed out that after the cliff dive would make an *excellent* jumping off point for that. (If anyone knows the post I mean btw, please link me so I can include it in the description.)

A/N: The whole thing is in first-person POV but I got a bit, ah, *experimental* with the way I styled it during the part where Will is actually telling the story. Sorry if that part gets confusing! The rest of it before and after is still first-person but done the normal way (you'll see what I mean soon enough). I like trying new things, what can I say? :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"You've hardly taken your eyes from the bluff since we arrived, Will. Thinking about pushing me over the edge before the Dragon even shows up?"

I smile, because of course you would ask me that. It's only fair after all. When is one of us ever not trying to kill the other? For once though, it was actually the furthest thing from my mind.

"Thinking about home actually," I answer, swallowing. "About how long it's been since…" I stop myself. So close, yet still so far out of reach. Or is it?

"Since you have seen your wife and stepson?" you try to finish for me, frowning in obvious displeasure at the turn this conversation seems to have taken, but I shake my head. No, this isn't about Molly and Walter. Though I will miss them and the dogs, it feels like I already said my goodbyes that day at the hospital. I can't ask them to follow where I'm going, and in all honesty, I wouldn't want to. I can't imagine saying goodbye to you the same way though, not when we've gone through so much to get to this point, not when we're here together and I *finally* understand what it is that I want.

"Hannibal," I begin haltingly, still not sure if this is a good idea. But I've waited this long to share one last part of myself with you, and I may not get another chance. There is no more

room for secrets between us now anyway. “I’ve never told you much about my childhood, have I?”

You blink at me in surprise. Obviously this isn’t where you expected this to be going. “No, Will. You’ve told me very little—that you were raised by your father, that he moved you both around from one port town to another, that you never knew your mother.” I grimace. You’re looking away at the same moment, so I’m not sure if you notice. You probably do. Somehow you always do. “Beyond that, the subject always seemed to change again every time it was brought up.” You look back at me slyly. “I take it now there was a reason for that.”

I smile shakily and take a seat on one end of the couch. You sit at the other end and we both turn to face one another, one arm slung over the back, ankle crossed over one knee, in perfect symmetry with each other. Such a small thing, but it makes me feel a little better, like everything up to this point was meant to happen this way.

“We still have some time before our guest should be here,” you say, glancing briefly towards the window. The sun has just begun to set. “You can tell me whatever you like. This is your hour, Will.” You smile and I can’t help but smile back, enjoying the little throwback to our therapy sessions in your office.

“Okay. Well…” Relax, Will. Just breathe. Breathe in, breathe out. In, then out. Why is that so difficult all of a sudden? “Just…save your questions until I’m done and…and promise me you’ll keep an open mind, alright?”

“I always do,” you answer. *Not this time, buddy,* I can’t help but think, but of course it’s too late to back out now. I just have to see this through and hope that statement holds as true as you believe it will. I can’t keep this all in anymore.

“Would it help if I steered us in the right direction to start with, for old time’s sake?” you ask. “Start from the beginning. Tell me your earliest childhood memories.”

My earliest memories. Sure, I can do that.

*

I remember when my view of the world was very different, in the most literal sense. Upside down really, from your perspective. I remember looking up at the sun from far below, through tinted hues of blue and green. I remember the warmth of the ocean, the taste of salt on my tongue, as subtle and constant as oxygen. I remember the water. I remember my mother.

Yes, I told you before that I never knew her. I lied. It’s a lie I’ve told for so often and so long, I hardly think twice about telling it anymore. I even told it to the man I would later call my father because it was easier, though I’m not sure he ever believed me. We never discussed it after that one time.

My mother left as soon as I was old enough to fend for myself. *(A murmur, discontented.)* No, please don’t judge her harshly. That’s, ah, that’s just the way it is. We’re mostly solitary beings by nature, with a few exceptions. Anyway, she taught me everything I needed to know

before she left. She sang me stories, our oral histories to be passed down from one generation to the next, and showed me how to hunt. *(Here a shared, almost devious smile.)* She also taught me about our gift, how we could look into the hearts and minds of others to understand what they wanted, and warned me if I ever chose to surface-walk that it would become more and more overwhelming over time, because there are so many of you up here and you all want such different things.

It was lonely with her gone, of course. I didn't know anyone else, had never met another one of our kind. I started swimming closer to the surface more often just so I could listen to the people on the boats. A few times, I went back to this inlet most of them didn't seem to know about. The same fisherman would always be there, lonely just like I was. I learned through my empathy that he had lost his wife and child recently, and here I was, a motherless child. It seemed like serendipity.

One day, I just…broke through the surface of the water, gave up tail and fin for lungs and legs, and probably scared the hell out of him to be honest. He recovered quickly enough though, jumped in thinking I was some drowning kid and pulled me out. And that's how I met my dad. *(A quick, embarrassed laugh.)*

To be honest, deep down I think he always knew, because he never really questioned any of it after the initial shock wore off. I told him my name, which is, um, kind of difficult for humans to pronounce apparently because he just shortened it to Will, and that I had no parents and I lived in the ocean, and that was the end of it. He made me put on his fishing jacket and a pair of old shorts he found in his truck, then drove home with me. We were father and son from that day on.

If that seems like the most unlikely thing I've said so far *(relaxed grin),* I should probably mention what he told me once I was grown enough to go to college. He…said he used to pray night and day that God would give him his wife and daughter back but that if He really couldn't, if it just wasn't possible or if they were better off staying where they were, to at least send him another child, so he'd have someone else to care about and wouldn't have to be so alone. Take from that what you will, I guess.

I learned pretty quickly the truth of my mother's words, but I suppose you know that already. And if you're wondering if I ever thought about returning to the sea after Dad passed, the answer is *yes.* All the time. I never stop thinking about it really. Something always stopped me from going back though, I couldn't explain. It just…felt like there was something I still needed up here, something I hadn't found yet. That, and I love it. It's silly, I know, but I love the woods, and the dogs, and coffee, and…believe it or not, I actually love the people up here and the cities too, even though I try to stay away because it's too much and it makes my head hurt, and I-I…*(A gentle, soothing hand comes to rest atop a white-clad shoulder. The hyper, unsteady breaths slow back to normal.)*

I guess I get a little overexcited talking about this. Sorry. *("Don't apologize, dear Will. Please, go on.")* Okay, so. Where were we? *("I believe you were about to address the nature of your headaches.")* Right. Well, I guess it's obvious. By the time you and I met, they were basically killing me. *(Another shaky smile met by a thoughtful, mildly concerned frown.)* I guess I'm not so immune to your diseases as I would have assumed, or being on the surface

for so long is part of what caused it. After so long being up here, having so many other thoughts bombarding my mind day after day, my brain just…couldn't handle it. If I hadn't gotten treatment eventually, I think I would have had no choice but to go back. *(A swallow.)* I was actually starting to consider it, before you got me thrown in jail.

("I'd say we are more than even in that regard now.") Yeah, except that at no point during your imprisonment did you worry you might actually *die* because of it. No, it's fine, I'm not really angry about that anymore, it's just… *(A heavy sigh.)* It's fine, really. I already forgave you, remember?

I might have still gone back, after I got out, once again had it not been for you. *("For the reckoning you promised yourself. Tell me, Will, now that the plexiglass is no longer between us—was it everything you thought it would be?" A stony silence follows for several long seconds.)*

No. No, it wasn't. I…stop changing the subject, Hannibal. *(A murmur of apology.)* I'm trying to tell you that I…I don't regret anything that happened between us, not a single moment. I could have gone so many times where you would have never found me again, hell, I *thought* about it. Especially during those long weeks I was on the *Nola,* my god, the ocean, Hannibal, it was *right there! (An almost hysterical giggle, followed by a choked up, tearful sound.)*

It was right there, swaying beneath my feet, and I wanted it *so badly.* I'd almost do it so many times, slip in telling myself it'd only be a few minutes, but I had to stop myself every time because I knew it was a lie. I knew if I so much as touched the water it would be years and years before I was ready to resurface again. You might be dead by then and I…couldn't stand the thought of that. *(A bitter, unhappy smile.)* I couldn't leave without you.

*

I stop speaking finally. I find myself reluctant to give voice to the rest—how watching you get taken away in handcuffs three years ago hadn't been a victory at all; instead it felt like I had lost twice. I knew suddenly, in that moment, that I would never be able to go home again. As long as you were locked away, I had condemned myself to this mortal life on the surface where I never quite felt like I belonged, trying to trudge through as close to a "normal life" as I could imagine. As if any of this was ever normal for me.

"And what will you do now, Will? You chose not to wade into the quiet of the stream when I gave you the opportunity, nor did you slip away into the sea. Does this mean you have chosen to stay and participate, come whatever may?"

"Come whatever may," I repeat softly. Something about the way you ask it gives me pause. We talk so often in metaphors and myths, you and I, that I wonder if that's what you think this is. Worse, perhaps you consider me delusional now like our wayward guest who calls himself the Dragon. I study your face for some sign of disappointment or condescension, but I find nothing. Whether you believe me enough to take what I said at face value, I can't tell, but I know you would never patronize me either way.

You excuse yourself to go wash up and change into some fresher clothes, and I take my place back at the window. I look out at the steadily darkening sky, the sheer drop from the cliff face

just a few yards away, and try to prepare myself for what is to come.

*

It's somehow everything we both hoped for and nothing like I imagined. We cling to each other, bodies bent and dripping black under the moonlight, black as the waves crashing against the rocks below. I tell you it's beautiful and watch the way your eyes change, taking on a range of emotions I'm still not used to seeing—surprise, desire, hope. It's a good look on you.

I want to see more of it, but I also want home. I want you there with me. I've had enough of this thin, shallow air and the ever-present scent of burning. You aren't the only one with a sensitive nose, you know. Fortunately my mother taught me one more secret I haven't shared with you yet—the real reason there are so few of us that I've never even met another of my kind. *'When you are old enough and find yourself wanting to mate,'* she had told me once, *'you will have to steal a human and bring him over. Unless you are only seeking companionship, you will never find what you are looking for amongst those born like you or I.'*

You can show me Florence in another lifetime, Doctor Lecter. I think I'm going to keep you after all.

I allow my body to relax and go limp, enough to gently pull us over the side. You wrap your arms around me tighter, pulling me closer as we both fall, your expression strangely calm and beatific for a man who surely must think I've just killed us both. I smile back, and manage even with the wind rushing past trying to force us apart to bring my lips to yours just before impact.

*

It's beautiful here, of course, even with our eyes having to adjust a bit to the darkness, and I breathe in deeply, feeling for the first time in years perfectly at ease and like I'm exactly where I belong. It takes an endearingly long while for you to catch on, but after a few minutes pass you slowly realize you haven't drowned because I'm still breathing air into your rapidly shrinking lungs.

The change is almost instantaneous for me, as if it had been only minutes instead of decades since I was last submerged, my shoes and pants shredded and floating away in pieces as my tail and fins reform. My gills reopen along my neck and my wounds heal up. Even the hair on my face starts falling out, which is a little disappointing. I've always liked my beard, but now I'll have to wait until the next time we want to revisit the surface to grow another one.

Your change is a little slower, but coming on steadily the longer I continue to breathe life into you. I'm so glad you aren't struggling or afraid, that you're understanding and accepting enough of what's going on to just let it happen. This would have been so much harder if you tried to push me away. Our shirts have become heavy in the water and clinging, so with care I pull them away from both of us. We have no need for them now anyway.

I pull back from our "kiss" once your transformation is complete and I can see your newly formed gills taking in air. You try to chase after my lips and I can't help but giggle, secretly delighted. The way you look at me then, as if *that* were somehow the most wondrous thing to happen today, makes me squirm a bit and I dart away behind a nearby rock, suddenly self-conscious.

You follow, of course, calling out my name. The way the ocean distorts sound to give an almost musical quality to our voices seems to distract you for a moment. For the first time, you really look at us both, taking in all the changes that have taken place since we fell.

It gives me a chance to look and admire as well. It feels so good being back in my natural state, my movements smooth and fluid rather than jittery and jerky the way they had often been on the surface; no matter how practiced I should have been after years, walking on two legs never felt quite as right to me as this does.

My tail is the same dusky midnight blue I remember. I trace over a few patterns I recognize in brown and green with my fingertips, memorizing them all over again. My fins are still kind of small and stubby, except for the one at the end which sways with the current like a wide arcing fan.

"Will," you repeat again, raking your eyes over me. "Just when I think you couldn't be any more magnificent…"

I smile shyly. "You want magnificence, just look at yourself," I say. Your new tail is shining and black, with iridescent maroon and red scales scattered throughout and long flowing fins, longest of all your tail fin which doesn't fan out like mine, ending instead in a straight and stiff rod. I bite my lip and look away, realizing where I've been staring, and would probably have blushed if we were on the surface. I wonder then if at any point during your studies you ever bothered to learn anything about fish biology; if not, then the significance of these differences between us in appearance is probably lost on you, and I still have another surprise or two to share after all. I decide to test it.

"So now you know my deepest, darkest secret of all," I say, chuckling lightly as I spread my arms out wide. "I'm a mermaid! Bet Disney didn't properly prepare you for that plot twist, did it?"

You smile back, either amused because I am or because you find my humor ridiculous for even suggesting you might have ever watched a children's cartoon; probably still not getting the hint yet then. "You are obviously much happier and more at ease with yourself in the water," you comment, half-nodding as if that's the only information you need to decide if this new life is right for us or not.

You swim closer, brushing your hand over my arm. "You are stunning, Will," you say, and I shiver. You drag me even closer, fingers brushing over my topmost scales now and filling me with so much *want* all of a sudden, I have to wrap my arms around your shoulders to steady myself. "What have you done to me, you irresistible creature?"

I smirk again, meeting your eyes coyly so I can say, "Made you into a big, strapping merman so you can take care of me, *obviously."* It's exhilarating *and* cute watching the way your eyes

darken, first with desire and then with a bit of…confusion, as you slowly start piecing together the breadcrumbs I've been dropping. It would be kinder perhaps to just come right out and say it, but I'm having far too much fun teasing you at this point.

"Why else do you think all the old shanty songs are about mysterious sea-women dragging strong, virile sailors back down into the depths with them?" I ask with a sharp grin. "Not sure how humans figured it out really, considering we all evolved to mimic the way your males look when we surface-walk, but…" I shrug and swim backwards, slipping loosely out of your grasp. "The old stories are accurate. *Mermen* are never born, so they have to be made. Makes courtship and breeding a bit of a complicated ritual, I suppose." It also explains why there are generally so few of us, though that's obvious enough by now that I don't bother pointing it out.

You blink at me, mouth hanging open just slightly. I've never seen you look so perplexed before, and it's absolutely adorable. "Will, are you…telling me that you're actually female?" you ask, astonished but thankfully not put off when I nod. Absurdly, though I guess unsurprisingly, the next question out of your mouth is, "Then what of Margot's baby?" The baby that never was. I grimace a little at the reminder of my own selfishness.

"I knew it couldn't actually be mine," I admit for the first time aloud. Clearly, Margot had wisely hedged her bets and must have slept with at least one other partner to ensure a successful conception. I was honestly flattered at the time that out of how ever many possible candidates there may have been, she had *chosen* to claim with certainty that it was mine, even if her reasons for it were probably manipulative and not entirely wholesome. "I just… pretended I didn't because I liked the idea of getting to play father."

You swallow a little then, possibly regretting bringing us back to such a dark place. "And I took that from you," you say. *Twice,* I almost add, thinking of Abigail once more, but I decide against it. Not because I don't miss her, but because it's been years and I'm tired of dwelling on these old wounds anymore.

Come to think of it, I've been *obsessed* with the idea of children since I met you, Doctor Lecter. It's all rather painfully obvious now when I look back on it, what my heart and my body have been trying to tell my brain all along for the past several years.

"Well, now you can make it up to me, can't you?" I say, drifting close again so I can lean in and grip silky strands of chest hair between my fingers. "We have our whole lives ahead of us," I whisper musically against your ear. "Plenty of time for you to fill me up with *many, many daughters."*

The snarl you make is loud of enough to startle a few small sleeping fish nearby and send them darting away in terror. You snare your arms around me tightly and wrap your tail around mine, undulating instinctively against *all* the right places to make my eyes roll back in my head. I didn't think we'd be starting *immediately,* but I guess here we are. We'll save more talking for later.

I drag your lips back to mine to seal them into another kiss, a *real* kiss this time.

I don’t think either of us will be feeling particularly inclined to return to the shore again for a long, long time.

Fin.

Chapter End Notes

...I also really like playing with gender dynamics and inserting little plot twists, if that wasn't obvious by now. ;D

I promise next time I decide to try my hand at first-person POV, I'll stick to the standard method and won't be weird about it again.

Café (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

> So here's me finally getting around to my lovely friend vulcan_waxpoet's request for something from Adam's POV and/or Nigel finding out about Adam's Aspergers. Here's both, bb, all wrapped up in a prompt from @otpprompts I've been wanting to do for a little while. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Beth is late.

Beth is late and Adam is beginning to feel very anxious. He already doesn't like going to new places or being in crowded public areas as it is, but he had agreed to meet Beth here because she had been insistent that he needed to try new things and go out with friends like normal people do instead of just staying home, and because she had *promised* that she would be here on time.

Adam knows that he has a different sense of what "on time" should mean than many neurotypicals seem to, he *knows,* but it still makes his heart beat fast and his foot tap against the floor in a quick, steady rhythm that builds ever higher with every minute that passes that she still has not arrived. The noises of the café are too much, the people crowding it too pushy and loud, and even he can interpret the angry glares some of the other customers seem to be aiming in his direction as he continues to sit at his table alone, without any food or beverage in front of him, as the other tables around the room quickly fill up.

"Excuse me, sir," says a voice right beside his ear at the same time that a hand comes to rest upon his shoulder, both causing him to startle very, very badly. The girl pulls her hand back and straightens hurriedly, to his immense relief, but he still feels very jittery and needs a moment to recover, a moment which he unfortunately doesn't have. "Sir, I'm afraid these tables are for paying customers only. You'll need to either order something or leave."

"I'm waiting for someone," he explains after swallowing, trying to retain some level of calm even though his nerves are shot worse than ever at the prospect of being kicked out. "I-I'm waiting for a friend who was supposed to meet me here at noon." It is exactly 12:19 now and he wants to go home, but he can't just *leave.* Beth promised she would come and leaving now would make him a bad friend. It would also be rude to order yet, he'd been taught enough etiquette by his dad to know that much. On the other hand, she is already late and the restaurant staff are getting cross with him now.

The lady standing over him repeats her last statement but louder and slower this time, causing him to wince. He drums his fingers repeatedly over his thighs and stares down at the tabletop in front of him, worrying his lip anxiously between his teeth. What is the right thing to do in

this situation? Harlan or Beth would know, but neither of them are here to help. What does he do, *what does he do?*

“Hey there, gorgeous. Sorry I’m late,” says a tall, broad-shouldered man Adam has never seen before, gliding smoothly into the seat across from him. Adam is too surprised and overwhelmed by everything that’s been happening to tell the man he’s made a mistake, that Adam is not here waiting for *him.* The man looks up at the waitress still standing there and says, “Two menus, miss, and a glass of water for my friend here.”

“Sir, this isn’t that type of establishment. You need to stand in line and order at the counter.”

“Listen, doll,” the man says, still speaking quietly but in a tone that feels sharper and more brusque. “You got takeout menus, I see them right there next to the tip jar. Now why don’t you go grab them so you can take our order and I’ll make sure to leave a nice wad of cash in that jar before we leave. Does that work for you?” The woman frowns but eventually nods and heads back to the counter to retrieve them. The man turns back to Adam then and shows him a large, toothy grin, so Adam smiles back, grateful that some part of the day seems to be going right at least and relieved that he knows what his response is supposed be.

“I’m Nigel, darling. What do you go by aside from ‘most beautiful thing in this room’?”

“I don’t go by any of those names,” Adam responds, blushing. “My name is Adam. Adam Raki.”

“Adam,” the man—*Nigel*—repeats. Adam thinks this man is very handsome and seems nice, even with that odd tattoo of a half-naked woman on his neck. “I hope you can forgive me for intruding like this,” Nigel says, gesturing at where he’s seated at the table across from Adam, “but I couldn’t just stand by and watch while some gorgeous creature was left sitting alone and getting harassed by the help, it would’ve been a fuckin’ crime. Whoever stood you up is a fuckin’ idiot.” Adam squirms awkwardly in his seat, unsure how to respond to any of that.

The girl returns with a glass of water for Adam and two paper menus, then stands there waiting with her arms crossed. Adam doesn’t think it’s normal protocol for a waitress to stand by and wait while you decide your order, but she had said this wasn’t really standard procedure and probably wants them to hurry and make a decision. Adam reads through the choices and frowns. It’s all very standard light breakfast and lunch fare but nothing he would normally eat at home—no all-bran cereal or mac and cheese, and all the sandwiches seem far more complicated than what he’s used to making for himself on occasion. Not wanting to annoy her further, he stumbles through an order for plain oatmeal and a small coffee with milk while Nigel orders “the ham grilled panini thing or whatever the fuck it’s called” with a bowl of chili and a large cup of whatever their strongest coffee is, black. The girl asks Adam what kind of fruit he wants with his oatmeal and gives an odd look he doesn’t know how to interpret when he shakes his head and says he doesn’t want any fruit, just the oatmeal.

“Disrespectful,” Nigel mutters with a shake of his head after she leaves. “I almost regret telling her I’d tip her anything.”

Adam shakes his head again. He hadn’t interpreted any of her words or actions as particularly rude, but then again if they were he would probably be the last to know. “It is very busy in

here. She has to deal with a lot of customers during the lunch hour rush, and we did upset her routine by ordering this way." Adam can certainly understand from personal experience why that would be very bothersome. He doesn't like having his routine disrupted either. "Also, workers in the service industry make notoriously low wages in this country, plus on top of that they usually have to divide all of the tips they make evenly between the servers, cooks, bussers, and so on at the end of every shift, so really, not leaving a tip would be the worst thing you could do not just to one individual server, but to the whole staff at large."

"Alright, I get your point, darling," says Nigel, wearing another easy grin though Adam is unsure why. "I'll still leave a tip, a really good one. A promise is a promise anyway, right?"

Adam smiles at that, nodding. That has always been one of his deepest core beliefs, right up there next to *'no lying,'* so he is glad to know his potential new friend feels the same way. They continue chatting amicably even after the food arrives, which is another strange new experience for Adam since normally he would be watching Inside the Actors Studio or a documentary on his laptop while he eats and wouldn't want to talk, but Nigel seems to want to know everything there is to know about Adam and doesn't tell him that he's talking too much. He doesn't mind how much Adam goes on and even asks questions about what he likes, what his hobbies are, and what kind of toys he designs for the company he works at.

Adam is delighted to have a chance to explain what he does to someone who seems genuinely interested in what he has to say. At one point he stops though, embarrassed, talking about work and related topics so much reminding him that he hasn't yet asked what Nigel does for a living. Surprisingly though, the answer Nigel gives is very vague and he makes a sweeping gesture with his hand, saying it's not something he wants to talk about in public.

"Why? Is it something illegal?" Adam asks, loudly enough that a couple sitting nearby turn to look at him with wide eyes. Nigel laughs heartily in response.

"You just say whatever fuckin' thing pops into that brilliant head of yours, don't you, beautiful?"

"Oh," Adam says, looking down into his now empty bowl. "Sorry. I'm not very good in social situations." He realizes now that he'll have to explain about himself even sooner than he had with Beth, which is always awkward and stressful for him. "I have this thing called Asperger's syndrome," he begins, then lets out a huff. Sighing heavily, he tries again. "Although actually it's not called that anymore, which is a little frustrating because I was very comfortable with that designation as it fit pretty well with most of my personality traits. Anyway, that term was eliminated by the American Psychiatric Association in 2013 when they published the new DSM-5, so now it and a lot of other similar diagnoses all fall under the same blanket term of autism spectrum disorder."

Here, he pauses, taking a breath. Many people wouldn't know about Asperger's even when it was a properly recognized diagnosis, but almost everyone has some sort of reaction to the word 'autism.' Nigel, however, merely continues to look calmly at him and smile, leading Adam to believe he may not know what it means. "Autism is characterized by deficits in social communication, often due to reasons such as lack of empathy or other factors—"

“You don’t need to explain autism to me, darling,” Nigel interrupts gently. He snorts. “Don’t look so surprised! I’m not completely uncultured. I read sometimes. Occasionally, some of it even sticks.” He scratches the back of his neck and adds, “To be honest, I thought you might have something like that going on but I wasn’t gonna say anything if you didn’t bring it up.”

“Oh,” Adam says again, blinking. “Then it…it doesn’t bother you?”

“No! Why would it do that, angel?”

“It’s just, um, most people tend to think I’m…weird.” For some reason, Nigel grins at this statement and leans closer.

“Ain’t nothing wrong with being a little weird, darling. Part of the beauty of fuckin’ humanity is that we’re all a little weird somehow. So you have a different way of thinking and seeing the world than others, big deal. That’s part of what makes your brain just as beautiful as the rest of you.” Adam has never had anyone say something like this to him before. His dad and some of his doctors used to tell him he was ‘special’ but it always felt like just a nicer way of saying the same things some of the kids at school would call him instead of an actual heartfelt compliment. Adam squirms happily in his seat and blushes, stuffing his hands in his jacket pockets to resist the urge to clap just a little.

Now that they’ve finished eating he almost regrets knowing they’ll both have to leave soon. The crowd in the restaurant hasn’t been nearly as overwhelming to deal with as he expected it to be since he ran into someone he could focus all of his attention on. He thinks it would be nice to see Nigel again soon, and is just about to tell him so, when a familiar voice calls his name.

“Beth, hi!” he answers, waving, still excitable and enthusiastic from the unexpected rush of good feeling he’s had throughout the meal. Nigel turns his head to glance at the newcomer, a neutral expression on his face as he sizes her up.

“Sorry I’m a little late,” she says once she’s near enough to not have to yell across the small crowded café. “I got caught up chatting with a friend for a bit and almost totally forgot we had plans,” she admits with a small laugh as though there is something funny about that statement.

“O-oh,” Adam says, bright smile dropping from his face as he looks down at the table again, head tilting and lips moving a bit as he tries to figure out what he’s supposed to say in response. He thinks maybe this is where he’s expected to state something like *‘it’s fine’* or *‘don’t worry about it,’* but the words won’t fit right in his mouth, sounding too much in his head like lies, so he discards them and decides not to say anything.

Beth continues to stare expectantly at him for a moment, then realizing Adam is done talking, turns to look down at Nigel with what seems like an odd expression in some way Adam can’t name though she is still smiling. “So, *hi,* by the way. I’m Beth Buchwald, and you are…?”

“Nigel,” his companion answers, “and you’re more than just a little late, Bess. Adam and I here have already been finished eating for some time and were just about to go.” Adam looks

up at that and blinks, not sure if he's reading this correctly, but it *sounds* like Nigel's wording might have been meant as he and Adam are about to leave *together*.

"It's *Beth,"* his neighbor corrects. "And go? Go where exactly?"

Nigel turns to face Adam again. "Now that's a good question. Where would you like to go, darling?" Beth's eyes go very wide but Adam hardly notices, concentrating as he is on the question that's been asked of him.

He had been intending to go straight home after this, but he likes the idea of spending more time with Nigel and doesn't have anything in particular planned for this afternoon. "There is a new showing about dark matter at the Hayden Planetarium in the American Museum of Natural History."

"That sounds perfect, beautiful," says Nigel and Adam smiles, pleased to have someone who wants to go with him.

Beth makes a noise and Adam looks up, suddenly remembering her presence. "Did you want to go too, Beth?" he asks politely.

"It's fine with me if that's what you want, Adam," says Nigel before she can answer. "But honestly I was hoping for more time with just you. I'm asking you out on a date, gorgeous."

"Now, wait just a minute!" Beth exclaims. Nigel looks up at her again with an arched eyebrow, then turns back to Adam and pointing at Beth asks, "Is this your girlfriend, angel?"

"No," Adam responds easily. "Beth is a friend." At the moment though, Beth is giving him another look he doesn't know how to interpret. She seems upset maybe, he thinks, but he can't tell why. Are they not friends? Does she want to go back to being just neighbors, or did he miss some non-verbal cue about something that an NT would have picked up on?

"Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend already?" Nigel presses further, and Adam shakes his head. Nigel grins widely at that and Adam smiles back again automatically.

"In that case, darling, would you like to go out with me? Romantically, I mean," Nigel clarifies.

Adam wonders if this nervous excitement he feels sweeping up through him is what NTs mean when they say they've 'got butterflies.' Smiling wider, he nods enthusiastically.

"Tch, unbelievable, this is just my luck," Beth mutters. "Right, well, you two have fun!" she says brightly but with a weird expression on her face, leaving Adam to look after her with a confused pull of his brows as she turns around abruptly and strides back out of the restaurant.

"Did I do something wrong?" he asks softly, perplexed and a little harried by the number of mixed emotions and missed cues that seem to have cropped up in the brief time that Beth was here.

"Not at all, darling," Nigel reassures him, slowly placing a warm, gentle hand over Adam's clasped ones on the table between them. "Some people just don't understand, when you've

got a good thing going, you gotta grab it hard enough it can’t squirm out of your grasp and run with it as fast as you can, instead of just pussyfooting the fuck around dropping hints and hoping what you want’ll fall into your fuckin’ lap.” Adam frowns consideringly, trying to unravel what exactly that means and how it applies to this situation.

Dropping a kiss to Adam’s knuckles while he mulls over that statement, Nigel stands up to pay now that the line seems to have cleared out enough. The girl who served them earlier is the one currently working the register.

“Thanks for putting up with my shit earlier, doll. I know you were just doing your job, but you did me a much bigger favor than I think you realize.” To show the full extent of his gratitude, Nigel pulls two hundreds out of his wallet and drops them both into the jar, much to the girl’s wide-eyed amazement. With a wink, Nigel turns and heads back to the table, extending his arm for Adam to take. “Shall we go now, beautiful?”

Nodding happily, Adam grabs it and doesn’t let go.

Chapter End Notes

If it wasn't obvious, I really, really, really hate Beth. #sorrynotsorry

Also, Aspergers was still an officially recognized diagnosis at the time the movie was originally made, but because I moved the timeline up to now (because reasons :P) I realized that meant Adam's spiel about himself would have to be updated as well. (This will be a thing in all of my spacedogs fics btw, as I'm a stickler for accuracy at least when it comes to this particular subject, mixed feelings about the DSM-5 decision aside.)

Heat (spacedogs a/b/o au)

Chapter Notes

> An anon requested: "I have a Nigel/Adam fanfic promo it's from starry night tumblr - Omega Nigel being on suppressants bc when one lives the kind of dangerous life he does you cant go around smelling like some “weak knot craving” omega. Adam growing up being told he’s not a “real” alpha after he presented bc of his Aspergers. The two people you wouldnt expect to an an omega and alpha meet and omega Nigel WANTS alpha Adam."
>
> Here it is at last, nonnie! ;)

Let’s get one thing perfectly straight. Nigel is not your average, run-of-the-fucking-mill Omega here, okay? Sure, he’s got needs and he has his heats, but he’s not one of those fainting flowers being controlled by his goddamn hormones all the time. He is a fucking businessman and a goddamn professional, that’s what he is, and he doesn’t have time for any of that pansy homemaking bullshit the rest of his gender seems to prescribe to.

It’s just that…well, when Adam Raki smiles up at him—and *holy hell,* is he short for an Alpha—Nigel feels himself go a bit weak in the knees, that’s all. He’s just got this sweet-tempered nature Nigel’s never seen before in an Alpha that goes perfectly with Nigel’s own skull-cracking, boss ass bitchiness like cream in coffee.

If any other Alpha had dared approach him in the side alley that night, Nigel would have ripped their fucking head off. Or tried to anyway. He was really weak from the loss of blood by that point, barely holding himself together as he pressed a hand tightly over the gunshot wound in his abdomen. That fucking cocksucker Grant had paid the ultimate price for double-crossing him on a deal, but not before he sent a bullet flying at Nigel’s gut.

Cocky little Alpha bastards like Grant were unavoidable in his line of business, always trying to stare him down into submission and some of the ugly pricks even sniffing around him from time to time whenever he was approaching heat—often enough that he’d tried suppressants a few times so the losers would quit being so fucking distracted, though he never could quite seem to stick to the schedule required to stay on them so eventually he fucking quit. It’s pretty much a non-issue since Nigel always makes it clear to them real fucking quick who’s actually top dog around here anyway.

Not so with Adam Raki. Nigel had curled his lip up into a snarl when the younger man found him, scenting his pheromones and automatically not trusting his intentions, but Adam had not once treated him like a piece of meat to slobber all over. Instead he had helped Nigel back into his apartment, helped patch him up when Nigel had insisted that a hospital was out of the fucking question, and prattled on and on about stars and raccoons and other seemingly

random, unrelated shit until Nigel all but wanted to melt into the young Alpha's gentle, soothing dulcet voice.

I could fall in love right here and fucking now, he thought drowsily to himself as Adam gentled him little by little without even seeming to know how he was doing it. And fall in love he did.

Nigel doesn't understand how someone like Adam could have gone unmated for so long. Scratch that, he knows exactly why—because most Omegas are fucking morons. If they'd rather have some asshole pushing them around all the time and getting into scraps with other Alphas over petty shit, that's their business. Nigel gets into turf wars and territorial fights in his line of work often enough all on his own not to need an Alpha who'll do it just to show what a tough guy he is. Adam doesn't give a damn about bullshit gender roles or feel the need to prove himself. He's happy to let Nigel take the lead in their relationship, and that suits Nigel perfectly fucking fine. In fact, it's one of the many things he adores about the younger man.

He doesn't even get caught up on the idea that as the Alpha he should always be the one doing the fucking, which is usually a deal breaker for 99% of the other fuckers out there and the reason Nigel never felt like bothering with them in the first place. If Nigel wants to top that night, Adam will happily flop onto his back and let his Omega shove lubricated fingers and cock up his ass like it makes no difference to him. Hell, he squirms and blushes and moans more prettily than any Omega or Beta Nigel's ever fucked, and the older man can't get enough of it. He can't get enough of anything Adam does to him or lets Nigel do in turn.

Adam is the best damn thing to ever come into his life. Nigel doesn't know how he got so lucky. It's disconcerting and absolutely fucking perfect, that's what it is. For exactly all these reasons and more, Nigel can think of no one better on the whole damn planet to share his heats with, can think of no other Alpha whose knot he'd ever be willing to take.

And *oh,* does he love taking it, make no mistake about that, especially when his heats roll around. He adores his sweet boy when he's gentle and pliant in his arms, but something absolutely fucking gorgeous happens when it's that time of the month. Primal instinct takes over and Adam suddenly turns into a wholly different beast altogether. Nigel would know he was in heat even if he couldn't feel it for himself from the way the shorter man suddenly starts shoving him up against the walls of their apartment, pushing himself up almost on tiptoes to nip and scent at his neck with a low growl in his own throat. Nigel fucking loves it.

He fucking loves the contrast of his sweet, mellow Alpha suddenly going ferocious on him and tearing all the barriers of clothing between them away, leaving the garments to lie there on the floor instead of tossing them immediately into the hamper with his usual fastidiousness. He fucking loves it when Adam shoves him down onto the bed, sucking hard bruises over his throat and collarbone, and pushes his hard dick into Nigel's already slick hole without even so much as a by-your-leave. He loves the way Adam pounds into him when he gets like this. He loves all of it.

And afterwards, he especially loves it when Adam comes down from the adrenaline rush back to his normal self, snuggling in close to his Omega to nuzzle and lick over every love bite and bruise.

No, Nigel doesn’t mind that he fell in love with Adam Raki. Not one fucking bit.

In Florence (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

> This fulfills the same prompt for two different requesters. madsturbation writes: "Early 90s fic where Hannibal is still in Florence doing a killing spree and whatnot, meeting teenage Will (on a student exchange program or something?) while Will was visiting the museum? idk help me out here?" and tfbl asks in a comment on one of my other fics: "A young budding serial killer named Will Graham travels to Italy and begins a murder courtship with The Monster of Florence."
>
> Here you both are, lovelies. (°ʖ°) Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will startles when he hears the soft beep coming from his own pocket, immediately self-conscious and worried that it might be bothersome to the other gallery patrons as he does his best to discreetly take the pager out and check it so the noise will shut off. He's still not really used to having this thing in the first place. His dad couldn't afford to get him an actual cellular phone, but still wanted a way to reach Will if he needed to while the younger man was away in Italy.

His dad rarely pages him though, usually content to wait for Will's weekly call from the dorm lobby's mainline. Whatever he wants to say to Will now must be urgent if it can't wait until Sunday.

He wanders the halls of the gallery for a bit, trying to find an employee who can point him in the direction of a pay phone. All he sees are other tourists though. Somehow he gets turned around enough that he finds himself in one of the emptier rooms further in the back. The only other occupants at the moment include a young Italian woman slouched against the far wall with her arms crossed and an obviously bored expression on her face, and a man Will can only see from behind, sitting on one of the benches and avidly sketching something in the portfolio in his lap, most likely the gorgeous painting directly in front of him if Will had to take a guess. An unusually well-dressed art student perhaps?

Will debates with himself internally for a moment, then decides the woman is probably the safest bet. While she has an obviously, deliberately aloof air about her, she's also the only person in the room clearly not preoccupied with doing something else. Maybe it's just because of how *into it* the guys seems, but somehow without even seeing the other man's face, Will feels as though interrupting him would be the most unforgivable sin. The mere thought of it sends a cold shiver down his spine for reasons he couldn't explain. So instead, he approaches the woman with a sheepish smile and hopes she'll take pity on the poor confused tourist looking for assistance.

“Um, *scusi signora...”* he begins, then blanks for a moment trying to remember the rest of what rudimentary Italian he’s learned so far.

“No,” she says firmly and loudly without even looking his direction. Will blinks, a little stunned by her immediate adamant refusal when he hadn’t even really said anything yet.

“I--sorry,” he says, deciding to forgo Italian for now and hope he can make his point better in English. “I didn’t mean to bother you, I just—”

“I am waiting for my *boyfriend,”* she cuts him off in heavily accented English.

Good for you, you stuck-up bitch, but I’m not interested in you that way. The words very nearly come out of his mouth, but he manages to force them back down and still keep up some semblance of a polite smile, though he imagines it must look like more of a grimace at this point. “That’s nice. Look, I just need help—”

The woman puts her hand up in a halting motion, so close to his face that he flinches back slightly. “How is it you Americans say? *Talk to the hand!”*

For a long moment Will doesn’t react, *doesn’t even breathe,* fearing that if he moves at all it will be to snarl and bite one of her fingers right off. His hands curl into fists so tightly at his sides, there might be blood if his fingernails were long enough to dig into his skin.

It isn’t until the woman drops her hand and slouches against the wall again, still sneering at him, that he feels in control enough to say, “Great. Thank you *so much* for your time,” and turn to head out the way he came. Or at least he would head out, if not for a new set of eyes he can now feel piercing him through, effectively holding him in place.

The man on the bench has stopped drawing and is now turned halfway to look at both of them—no, to look directly *at Will.* Without meaning to, Will meets his gaze head on, and something buried deep inside him shudders at what he sees. The man’s eyes are dark, as inscrutable as those of a reptile or a shark, with tiny pinpricks of red that might be a trick of the light, but what Will can see behind them is something avaricious *and hungry.*

The very next moment it’s gone, the man’s eyes visibly warming and softening as he smiles in a friendly manner and crooks his finger for Will to come closer, though Will can’t shake the feeling that doing so would be akin to walking right into the waiting jaws of a cobra. Yet come closer he does, compelled by curiosity and an astonishing lack of fear.

He comes close enough that the man now has to crane his neck a bit to look up at him, and that tiny act is enough to make Will feel like the awkward and embarrassed teenager he truly is, so he sits quickly on the bench beside him to try to alleviate the feeling. It occurs to him only a second later that that might have been the man’s intention, but it’s too late to get up now.

“I could not help but overhear what you were saying a minute ago,” the man says in a rich, warm voice that curls smoothly around his words in an accent Will doesn’t recognize. It’s distracting enough that Will’s brain takes a few seconds to catch up with what those words

actually are, but once it does he cringes slightly with a quick glance at the unfinished sketch in the man's lap.

"I'm really sorry. I didn't want to disturb your, *uh,* your work," he apologizes.

The man's smile widens enough to show teeth, that cobra metaphor suddenly feeling a lot more literal in Will's mind though his mirth seems quite genuine. Maybe *because* it's so genuine. "It's quite alright. Something far more interesting has captivated my attention in its place."

Will blushes, biting his lip under the intense scrutiny. Is this man *flirting with him?* He doesn't have the experience to tell for sure, but it really seems like he might be. What a way to be introduced to the adult world of dating—first time really being away from home, barely out of high school, and here he is suddenly getting hit on by an older man. Not that a guy in his twenties really counts as that much older, except that to an eighteen-year-old he *kind of does.*

"My name is Hannibal Lecter, by the way," the man offers, extending his hand. Will accepts it, though only briefly, long enough for a quick shake before he almost immediately drops it.

"Will," he says. "Will Graham."

"So what is it I can help you with, Will Graham?" Hannibal asks with a confident grin that borders on cocky and maybe just a little bit sly. On anyone else it would be insufferable, but Hannibal exudes so much charm and sincere interest in Will that that the younger man couldn't find it in himself to dislike the guy if he tried.

"Oh, um, I was just trying to find the payphones," he answers, silently cursing the man for being so charming and attentive that his own bashfulness comes out to the forefront and makes it impossible for him to speak properly or even look at the other anymore. "My-my dad just paged me. He never does that, so I thought it must be something really important he has to tell me." That's far more explanation than this stranger probably needs, but something about him makes him very easy to talk to. A little voice in Will's head whispers that that's part of the danger behind it.

"Ah, is that all?" Hannibal asks, reaching then into his front jacket pocket to pull out a cell phone, one of the newer-looking models that has a small green screen on the front and a short, stubby antenna that doesn't have to be pulled out. "In that case, you can simply use mine. The lines for the public-use phones are always atrociously long here, I'm afraid."

"Oh no, I couldn't do that!" Will protests. "My dad's all the way in Louisiana—in the States, I mean. The long distance charges—"

"Are of absolutely no concern to me," Hannibal says, with a small diffident smile as if in apology for the interruption. He holds the phone out for Will to take. "Please, Will, I insist."

The teen glances around almost frantically, looking for some other excuse not to accept. Another person has entered the room since they've been talking, an Italian man with short-cropped hair and a goatee who looks hurriedly away from them both when Will meets his

gaze, shifting his focus back up to the Botticelli before them. “I think we’ve probably been disturbing the other guests enough already,” he lowers his voice to almost a whisper.

Hannibal follows his gaze to the other man and actually smirks when he spots him. “Not at all,” he says. “Simply another regular who appears to have become quite taken by the splendor of *La Primavera* recently,” he explains in a tone that can only be described as wicked amusement, leaving Will to wonder what inside joke he’s missing out on here.

“However,” Hannibal continues, flipping his portfolio closed, “I concede that it would be politer to everyone else if we took this outside.” He rises from his seat and offers a hand to help Will up.

“But your drawing...” Will trails off, feeling helpless as he accepts the hand of this handsome, charismatic stranger anyway. It doesn’t matter how loudly his brain screeches warnings at him when Will is too young and inexperienced to have built the proper mental forts and barriers just yet to avoid being caught up in someone’s orbit like this, especially that of someone as magnetic and alluring as Hannibal Lecter.

“Forget the drawing. I believe I’ve found a far better muse to inspire me.” *Dammit,* Will thinks, blushing furiously once again. Just because he’s a teen who’s never dated anyone doesn’t mean he’s naïve enough to fall for an obvious line like that one, *so why in the hell is this shit working on him now?* Maybe because the way Hannibal delivers it makes it not sound like a line at all, as if every word is meant sincerely and has a far deeper meaning to it than Will has grasped yet.

A startled cough behind him makes Will turn his head to look. The man who was staring at them earlier has apparently been doing so again, and now turns away completely to look at one of the paintings along another wall, though not before Will catches a glimpse of the seemingly appalled expression on his face. Mortified, Will remembers that the country which marks the very home of the Vatican itself is probably the least appropriate place to showcase “homosexual tendencies” in public and tries to pull his hand away. Hannibal allows it, though only, it seems, so he can press a hand to the small of Will’s back as he guides the younger man towards the exit, an even bigger smirk than before on his features as if he is not in the least perturbed by the Italian man’s reaction and finds it humorous.

*

Outside, away from the crowds in a shaded nook that protects them somewhat from the bright Tuscan sunlight, Will finally gives in and accepts the phone from Hannibal so he can call his dad. *“Hello?”* his father finally picks up on the seventh ring. Will thinks about the time difference and worries for a second that he may have just woken the man up, before he remembers that his dad was the one who paged him in the first place.

“Hey Dad, it’s me,” he answers, shifting nervously on his feet. Though Hannibal is polite enough to look away and pretend like he’s not listening, he is still standing near enough that they might almost be touching, as if he fears Will might try to make a break for it at any moment if he doesn’t stay close. Somehow though, Will gets the impression it’s not *the phone* he’s feeling territorial over. The thought makes it difficult to focus on what he’s saying right now.

"Oh hey, kiddo! Sorry I didn't pick up right away, I didn't recognize the number. Where you callin' from anyhow?" Will curses himself silently for forgetting his dad had finally given in and splurged for caller ID last month, mostly so he could screen calls from possible debt collectors.

"The Uffizi," he answers vaguely. Better to let his dad assume it's a payphone than risk a lecture about borrowing a stranger's cell phone.

"Gesundheit," his dad responds immediately. Will rolls his eyes, unable to keep the fond smile off his face.

"It's an art museum," he clarifies. "So what did you want to talk about that couldn't wait til Sunday?" he asks, skipping past the idle chit-chat they'd normally get into in order to avoid wasting any more of Hannibal's minutes than necessary. His dad will understand, assuming the short length of his call has to do with the number of quarters he has on him.

"That actually is what I wanna talk about," his dad says. *"I got another job lined up on one of those big commercial fishin' boats and it's shipping out tomorrow, so I'll be outta town for a couple weeks and won't be home if you try to call."*

"Oh." For a moment Will feels a mix of different emotions he isn't sure how to name. On the one hand, he won't have to check in with his dad during that time, and although he doesn't resent having to do it and actually likes catching up with him when he can, the thought of getting a break from it for at least a little while is oddly freeing. On the other hand though... "Does that mean we're moving again?"

"No, no, not anytime soon," his dad reassures. *"This is just a temporary gig. I promise I won't start pullin' up the stakes without tellin' ya first anyhow,"* he laughs. Will merely hums, not so amused by the prospect that it might happen sooner or later while he's away. While moving around all the time had been fine as a kid, the fact that he's in college now in New Orleans—when he isn't half a world away on a foreign exchange program, that is—might complicate things when he gets back if his dad has to move across state lines again. It might just be time for Will to leave the nest for good if that happens, and he's not sure whether or not that would be a good thing just yet. They are each other's anchors in a lot of ways; his son is the only thing Graham gives a damn about in the world, and Will needs someone in his life who keeps him grounded in reality when his imagination gets too...weird.

"I'll give you their emergency number though for just in case. You call it if anything comes up, okay? I love you, son."

"Love you too, Dad," he says before they both hang up. He avoids Hannibal's eyes as he hands the phone back to him, feeling oddly stripped bare as though he's revealed far too much about himself in just that one short conversation. "Thanks," he mumbles awkwardly.

"My pleasure," Hannibal says. When Will shifts as though he's about to head back inside though, Hannibal stops him with a gentle hand on his arm. Will tenses a bit and peers up at him finally through his glasses.

“I am glad it doesn’t seem to have been a serious emergency,” Hannibal says pleasantly. “I half-feared whatever it might be would be cause enough to send you home, and I’d hate to have you whisked away from me so soon after we met.” He’s trying to come across as playfully flirtatious and not too serious, Will can tell, and if he were *just a bit* more practiced at it or using his acting skills on someone just a mite less perceptive than Will, he would succeed too. Will knows better though, his heart thumping in his chest with both excitement and fear, the pressure on his arm *just a bit* too much to be casual.

“You’re kind of intense, you know,” he whispers, half-hoping the man will ease up and try to dial it back a bit in response, yet also half-hoping he won’t.

Hannibal does seem momentarily taken aback, as though surprised that Will noticed, but he recovers quickly enough. “Merely truthful,” he replies. The hand on Will’s arm has not fallen away yet and even tightens just the teeniest bit. Will shivers.

“We don’t even know each other,” he tries next, though he’s rapidly losing sight of what he’s trying to accomplish here anymore.

“You’re right,” says Hannibal. “I’d very much like to rectify that if you’ll allow me. It’s not so late in the afternoon yet. May I take you out for lunch?”

“You’re giving me a choice?” Will asks, not bothering to keep the snark out of his voice as he eyes the hand that still hasn’t let go of him yet.

Hannibal looks down at his own hand and smiles, the fringe of his hair falling into his eyes and making him genuinely look his own age, like someone who really isn’t that much older than Will, for at least a moment. He lets go at last and offers the crook of his own arm for Will to take instead, smiling up at the younger man again in a clear gesture of, ‘*Shall we then?’*

Looking up into the other man’s confident, self-assured eyes, Will decides to save his doubts and possible regrets for later, and accepts.

*

Over lunch, Will learns that Hannibal is a recent graduate from a medical school in Paris, taking some time off for a sojourn in Florence before applying for an internship somewhere in America, most likely Johns Hopkins. Will feels like he ought to resent the man more for his obvious wealth and means, but finds that he can’t. He tells Hannibal about the scholarship he got to study abroad for a year, even explaining how it was the only option he had after a mix-up with his paperwork at the school he was enrolled in back home meant he wouldn’t have been eligible for his Pell grant next semester, and would have had to drop out for at least that length of time because of it, if not longer.

“To think,” Hannibal says, “if the hands of bureaucracy had worked in this instance as they should have instead of forcing you to come up with a more creative solution, we would not be sitting here together now.”

“Don’t tell me you believe in fate, Doctor Lecter,” Will smirks, taking another sip of his drink. He insists on calling him that now even after Hannibal explained that he wouldn’t be licensed yet until he completes his residency in the States.

Hannibal hums thoughtfully, appearing to seriously consider the implied question. “Who can say what patterns will emerge from the colors randomly splashed on the canvas of life?”

“That might be either the deepest thing I’ve ever heard or the most pretentious.”

Hannibal narrows his eyes in almost a mock-glare, though rather than irritated he seems to find Will’s sarcastic wit oddly charming, now that he’s coaxed the younger boy out of his shell enough to get to see this side of him.

“Perhaps we were meant to meet like this, or perhaps our paths would have inevitably crossed at a later time in our lives no matter what.”

“Or never at all,” Will points out. Hannibal frowns as though that particular possibility is too unappealing to even consider.

“What a dreary existence that might have been if true,” he says.

“You don’t have to lay it on so thick, you know,” Will mumbles, embarrassed, into his cup as if that will help hide the flush to his cheeks. “I mean, I’m here, aren’t I?”

“ ‘Tengo hambre de tu boca, de tu voz, de tu pelo y por las calles voy sin nutrirme, callado, no me sostiene el pan, el alba me desquicia, busco el sonido líquido de tus pies en el día.’ ”

“Or, y’know, completely ignore what I just said and quote poetry at me in a language I can understand maybe every other word of at best instead. Totally normal first date material and definitely not overdoing it at all.”

Hannibal chuckles lightly under his breath. “I apologize,” he says, and Will tilts his head at the first truly insincere words he’s heard pass the other boy’s lips. “I hope you believe me when I say this behavior is entirely irregular of me. There’s something about you that makes me want to be...frightfully honest.”

“Better watch that,” Will deflects in what he hopes is a playful tone, not wanting to reveal the effect Hannibal’s words are having on him and certain that he’s failing miserably regardless. “Or before you know it, all your secrets will be mine!”

Will catches another glimpse of the cobra in the way Hannibal’s eyes darken, but then the older boy smiles slowly and says, “So they will. I wonder what you shall do with them.”

*

It is nearing midnight by the time they are finally at the gates to Will’s dormitory. Hannibal has delayed bringing them to this moment for as long as possible, and indeed, had privately hoped that by this late hour the gates would be locked so he could offer up his own apartment as an alternative place for Will to stay for the night. He is reluctant to let this dazzling boy out

of his sight for even a moment lest this all turn out to have been nothing more than a waking dream.

Alas, luck is not on his side this night and so he must allow the boy to go...for now. It should concern him perhaps how swiftly and deeply he's fallen for the younger man in the space of less than a day, and if he were an older, wiser man perhaps at the very least he would have held a tighter rein on his self-control and not been so open and obvious about it from the beginning. He simply hadn't been able to help himself, not from the moment he saw that angelic spark of rage and fire light up within a face and form that could well have stepped down from one of the canvases in that very room if not for the modern clothing he wore.

Normally Hannibal isn't one to believe in such things as signs, or fate, or love at first sight. He has never been happier in his life to be proven wrong about something. Will Graham is clearly meant for him and no one else.

The day had begun with probing conversation meant to feel each other out and learn what they could about one another in the space of a few short hours, and had ended with the two of them walking hand in hand across the Santa Trinita bridge without a thought for what onlookers may think, few as there were left still walking the streets so long after dark.

They have already exchanged numbers, Hannibal extracting a promise from Will to call him after class lets out tomorrow so they can make arrangements to see each other again, but it's still not enough. Here, now, under the light of the streetlamps and the stars overhead, Hannibal is feeling impulsive once again. Before Will can flit away out of his grasp for the night, Hannibal snares an arm around the smaller boy's waist to draw him in closer.

"Hannibal, wha—*mmph!"* The older man wastes no time swooping in to press that sweet, plush mouth he's been staring down at all night against his own, startling the younger into grasping the front of Hannibal's shirt tightly between his fingers. He even lets out the most adorable startled squeak which deepens into a moan when Hannibal's tongue slips past the seam between his soft lips.

It only lasts for a few seconds before Will has the wherewithal to pull away, cheeks flushed, glasses slightly askew, panting breathlessly. *"H-hey,* you-you just did that without asking me first!" he protests, scrunching his face into something close to a pout although he still has yet to let go of Hannibal's shirt. Never has the word *"cute"* come so readily to Hannibal's mind before this, but it's all part of the young American's charm, he muses.

"I did," he admits. "Why should it matter, unless that was your first kiss?" Will's eyes widening at the question is the only answer he really needs, but he hadn't expected the affirmation to elate him so much. To be the only one who has ever tasted him like this...Hannibal feels possessive and curiously needy all of a sudden, and with a low growl in his throat takes yet another kiss from the shorter man without seeking permission first, pleased when instead of putting up another token protest Will merely shudders as the kiss deepens and puts his arms around his shoulders to pull him even closer, this time becoming a far more active and eager participant.

This time when their lips part again, Will pushes himself back a step with a hand against Hannibal's chest, wonderfully flushed and disheveled and grinning as he also swats away

Hannibal's hands which have managed to find their way under his shirt. *"Okay,* so, um," he begins, voice huskier than normal before he clears his throat. "I'm gonna head inside now," he says, still smiling as he steps through the gate at last and closes it behind him. "And my virginity's going with me before you get any ideas about stealing that too while you're at it," he adds playfully, his ears going pink not a moment later as if he can't believe he just joked about that.

"All I wanted was a goodnight kiss," says Hannibal. "Believe me, when I'm after more than that, you'll know."

"Oh my god, I'm gonna pretend you didn't just say that," Will says, caught somewhere between flustered and amused. "Get out of here already, you creep!" he finishes, laughing.

"Arrivederci, Will," says Hannibal, smirking as he turns to walk away. Behind him he hears a soft snort and a muttered *"ciao"* before Will's quiet footsteps carry him away as well. Hannibal resists the urge to do something woefully undignified like turn back around to watch him go in.

His own steps carry him not straight home just yet, but down an unlit deserted alleyway first. Light and airy as he feels now after the perfect day he just had, the evening is still not over yet. There is one little errand he needs to take care of first.

He waits until the man who has been following at a distance behind makes it a few paces down the alley past him before he steps out of his hiding place in the shadows. "Good evening, Inspector," he greets pleasantly.

The man stops in his tracks, shoulders hunched in as he realizes he has been caught and one hand going automatically to hover over the holster on his hip before he turns around slowly. "Can I help you, signor?" he asks cautiously.

"Yes, for a start, you could do me the favor of not pretending as though you haven't been following me closely since earlier this afternoon, or watching me sketch at the Uffizi all this week. You are a dreadful actor and not very good at hiding, Inspector."

It is only fortunate Will had not noticed they were being followed since leaving the gallery together, in part because Hannibal had been determined to keep him from noticing. While Hannibal finds it by turns amusing and at worst something of a mild nuisance, he imagines the younger man would have been quite perturbed to realize their movements were being tracked.

"And so what if I was?" asks the detective carefully, giving up all pretense.

"Am I currently under investigation, Signor Pazzi?" The man is visibly surprised by the use of his name. Clearly he had not expected Hannibal to be studying him as closely as Pazzi had been observing him.

"That depends," he answers once he recovers from the shock. "What would you have done to that boy if I wasn't following?"

Hannibal smirks and takes a step closer. The other man eyes him warily but still does not draw his weapon yet. “You thought I had ill designs on him and were hoping to catch me in the act,” Hannibal says. “Tell me, Signor Pazzi, if that had been the case, would you have stepped in to stop me and played the hero, or simply stood at the sidelines to watch, content to have found proof with which to damn me?”

“I am not here to play petty mind games with you, *il Mostro,”* says Pazzi for the first time with real bite, going at last for his gun. Hannibal lunges at the same time, grabbing him by the wrist as the two of them struggle.

The fight ends abruptly a few seconds later, with a gunshot. The sound of it is muffled by the end of the pistol’s muzzle being pressed tightly against Inspector Pazzi’s stomach.

“A pity,” Hannibal says as he allows Pazzi to fall to the pavement to bleed out, kicking the gun aside just out of the man’s reach. “Now the meat is spoiled.”

Pazzi attempts to speak but only manages to gurgle up a few wounded sounds, spitting up blood as he does so.

Crouching low to the ground, Hannibal continues, “Initially I was curious to see how this would play out organically. It would have been amusing to watch you make a fool of yourself attempting to bring me in on official charges, but plans change.” It would not do to have suspicion come down on him now, however seemingly baseless, and risk frightening off his lovely new companion when their romance has only just begun. He tilts his head rather like an inquisitive bird. “Have you ever been in love, Inspector?”

The inspector does not answer, choking out one last breath before his eyes dim and glaze over. Hannibal stands then, brushing a speck of imaginary dust from the front of his coat.

“You were right.” Hannibal freezes in place. His heartrate, which had not raised in the slightest as he fought with the dead man in front of him and killed him, now shoots up erratically in recognition of the voice behind him.

As Hannibal turns, Will steps forward out of the shadows, not stopping until he is standing only a few feet from the older man. “He really was bad at hiding.” Will smiles faintly. “Although it was cute the way you kept trying to hide him from me, always steering us or moving just in the way of my line of sight every time he got near.”

“Will...” Hannibal breathes, finding himself too at a loss for words to speak otherwise and too stunned to move.

“A less empathetic person might have been paranoid you two were in cahoots and planning to off me or something,” Will continues, taking another step closer, “but I could tell he was a cop from a mile off, and I knew *I* hadn’t done anything wrong, so....” He deliberately trails off, sliding his hands casually into his front pockets and shrugging. “Simple math, really.”

“And now you know me, see me,” Hannibal says hoarsely, finding his voice again at last. “What will you do with what you’ve learned tonight, Will?”

Will takes one final step forward, slowly, with his hands down at his sides, so as not to spook the older man into doing something he may regret. When he stops, he is close enough that Hannibal can feel Will's breath ghosting against his lips. *"Teach me."*

It takes a moment for the words to sink in, but as soon as he absorbs their meaning, Hannibal pounces. He all but lifts Will bodily off his feet and slams him against the nearest brick wall, fingers of one hand threaded tightly through the boy's curls at the back of his head, and kisses him hard, groaning as Will grips him just as tightly back by his shoulders and bites at his bottom lip.

Hannibal Lecter is not a praying man, but if he were, he might send thanks to whichever deity above or below put this miraculous, beautiful creature in his path.

~ * ~

"You know, Jack, Will and I met in Florence as well, just as I was finishing up my education and Will was starting on his own."

"You don't say!" Jack responds genially, setting down his fork. "And they say Paris is supposed to be the city of love," he chortles.

"How did it happen?" asks Bella, directing her question at Will, who is sitting directly across from her, with a warm smile.

"We were both at the Uffizi," Will answers. "I needed to make a call and Hannibal let me borrow his phone."

"Before we ever spoke," Hannibal adds, seating himself at last as he finishes setting out their next course, "I saw him from across the room and thought to myself, 'If I could see that face every day forever, I would always remember this time.' "

Will looks up and meets his husband's eyes. The two of them share a soft smile before Hannibal lifts up his glass and says, "A toast then. To Florence, where each of us met our other half who makes us whole."

"To Florence," says Bella, raising her own glass.

"To Florence," says Jack next.

Will's eyes never leave Hannibal's as he raises his own. "To Florence."

*

"It was wonderful to finally meet you, Bella," says Hannibal, offering to help her with her coat as he and Will stand in the foyer together with the Crawfords to see them off.

“You as well, Doctor,” she says.

“Will, I’ll see you tomorrow at the lab, right?” Jack asks as he shrugs on his own coat.

“I have a few papers left to grade after my class lets out, but I’ll be down soon after,” Will answers.

“Great,” says Jack, nodding agreeably. He might say more than that if not for the cross look he would surely get from his wife for bringing up work here. “Doctor Lecter,” he says, reaching to shake the man’s hand. “It was a wonderful meal, as usual. Thank you again for the invitation.”

“You and Bella will have to join us at our table again soon,” says Hannibal.

“We’d be delighted,” he answers warmly, and steps outside then with his wife.

After opening the passenger door to let Bella in first, Jack walks around the front of the car and slides into his own seat, turning the key in the ignition. “Such a lovely couple,” he says.

“Mm,” Bella hums agreeably. “They do seem pretty cute together.”

“Not as cute as you and me though, baby,” he responds, his words having the desired effect as they pull an amused chuckle from her.

“Not everything is a competition, Jack!” she says, smiling as she rests her hand briefly atop his own.

“You’re just saying that because you know we’d win.” Bella scoffs and sets her hand back in her lap.

“Let’s just go already before they start to wonder what we’re doing camping out in their driveway.”

Grinning, Jack backs out onto the road and drives them both home.

*

“Well, that was a side to Jack Crawford I’ve never seen before,” Will says as they finish cleaning up.

“Their personalities complement each other well,” Hannibal agrees. “What will you and Jack be doing in the lab tomorrow? I’m not aware of any new cases that have come up recently.”

“It’s not new,” Will says. “He wants me to help him look through some old unresolved ones that he thinks could be connected to the Ripper.” As he says this, he glances over at his husband and arches an amused brow. “Should be interesting to see what he thinks he’s found.”

“Poor Jack. Perhaps we should gift him with a new sounder soon that he may sink his teeth into.” In all his years of searching for the Ripper, not once has Jack ever suspected that he has

not been hunting one man, but two, or that both of them are associates he works closely with and trusts.

“Mm, did you have something particular in mind?” Will asks, back turned as he puts away the last of the dishes.

“I have one or two ideas,” Hannibal says, coming up to wrap his arms around his husband’s waist from behind and brush his lips over the nape of his neck. Will relaxes into his arms and leans his head back to allow him better access. “But I can think of something far better to occupy ourselves with for the moment,” he adds, and without further ado sweeps Will’s pliant body up to carry him out of the kitchen bridal style.

“H-hey, put me down! I’m not as light as I was sixteen years ago, you know!”

“I beg to differ,” Hannibal rejoins, and proceeds to carry his grumbling, yet secretly pleased, spouse up the stairs and into their bedroom.

Fini.

Chapter End Notes

The poem Hannibal quotes above in Spanish is the first verse of Pablo Neruda's Love Sonnet XI.

Bad Day (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

This might best be described as "Adam Raki and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day." ~~Except it might actually be *best best* described as "The Author's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day," because Adam is his spirit animal and the author sometimes just writes spacedogs to exorcise his own feelings, but that's already way more information than you really need to know.~~

Technically I consider this a prompt because I was tagged to do one of those "color palette" ficlets on tumblr by my good friend @itsybitsylemonsqueezy and thought I'd kill two birds with one stone since I was already working on this, but I also broke about 30,000 rules for how you're supposed to do it, so it probably doesn't really count. :P Anyways, hope you enjoy! (And yes, before you ask, I'm doing great now, thanks! :D)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day has spiraled quickly out of Adam's control and it isn't even noon yet. It had started out simply enough—a few extra emails than he expected in his inbox this morning requiring his immediate attention. He felt a little anxious as he read the exchanges between some of his coworkers over the weekend asking for his input. It's luckily nothing truly urgent so they most likely won't be too upset that he waited until Monday morning to answer their late night missives, but it makes him feel a little guilty and anxious that he's kept them waiting nonetheless.

He reminds himself firmly that they will surely understand he has strict boundaries between his work life and his personal life that disallow him from answering work-related messages during his off days—he'd had to implement these boundaries early on in his career or he would never have any time truly to himself, would instead be spending every Saturday and Sunday anxiously checking his work email every hour and feel obligated to give a thorough and informed response to each and every one. He knows how strongly his boss feels about his employees not gaining too many hours of overtime per week, so this is really the best solution for everyone.

Unfortunately, the day only gets worse from there. His coworkers' inquiries distract him from his other projects, their deadlines looming large at the end of next week, and people keep interrupting him for some reason today to ask him about this thing or that, or just stop by to distract him with idle chit-chat because he's "such a good listener" when surely most of them must realize by now he's just quiet because he's not good at small talk and understands that most of them don't want to hear the kinds of things *he* wants to talk about. He tunes them out for the most part and hums or says something noncommittal when it seems a response is expected of him, eyes glued to the screen in front of him with hardly a glance at the other

person, sometimes without wasting the time to look up at them even once. He honestly isn't *trying* to be rude about it, it's just difficult for him to focus on so many things at once.

It's very frustrating to have his attention pulled in so many directions at once when he just wants to accomplish each simple task penciled out on the list next to his keyboard, and all the more irritating when many of the questions people seem to have today are ones they could have easily asked someone else or researched for themselves. If it weren't completely illogical to even consider, he would almost wonder if there wasn't some blinking sign on the side of his cubicle that everyone else could see but him, singling him out as the sole associate in the office today who has any of the answers and plenty of time to spare.

He has just begun picking up where he left off in the middle of a report he wants to have finished before lunch when yet another person pops into his cubicle and says something loudly enough that he *should* have been able to hear it just fine, but his nerves are close enough to shot by now that he can't parse the words properly in his head, so he turns halfway in his chair and asks more sharply than he intends, *"What?* What was that you just said?" He cringes a bit when he realizes not a moment later that the voice he just heard belongs to his employer.

"I said, did you get that email I just sent you? Geez, you're wound up tight today, Adam, aren't you, buddy?"

Adam nods rapidly. "Yes. I mean, uh, sorry, Mr. Klieber. You just...caught me at a bad moment." Adam clears his throat. "Yes, I got your email and already sent you my response."

"Okay, good, good," Mr. Klieber says, nodding. Adam tries not to shift irritably in his seat when his boss shows no signs of leaving just yet. "You know, this is a pretty important deal we're about to make, Adam, I just want to make sure we've got all our ducks in a row here."

Adam cannot fathom what ducks have to do with anything or why anyone would come up with such an absurd saying to describe situations such as this one, but he nods to show that he understands the gist of what Mr. Klieber is saying. "Every question you asked should be answered satisfactorily in my response."

"Alright, I'll go check here in a minute," his boss says in an exaggerated manner, hands up in the air as though Adam has just snapped at him even though the younger man is certain he merely stated exactly what he needed to know and doesn't hear anything untoward in his own tone. "Maybe, uh, go take an early lunch today, Adam. Cool your heels a bit, that oughta help you loosen right up." The man huffs out a chuckle as though there is something funny about that statement, but if there is Adam can't hear it.

Rather than argue the point because he simply has no patience or energy for it, Adam merely nods. "I'll go just as soon as I've finished this report, Mr. Klieber," he says. His boss nods and turns to go, and Adam is spinning around to face the screen again almost before he's even gone.

Even with the other man gone, however, it's all started to become too much. No one is stopping by to speak with him any longer, but he can still hear the chatter of other people's conversations, the sound a disjointed din in his ears though it's no louder than normal and

usually he can tune it out relatively well. Someone laughs and the noise is too harsh, as though it were right up against his ear, and another who must be in a rather cheerful mood in direct antithesis to his own is whistling some tune he doesn't recognize as they walk by. It makes him wince, the sound too shrill and high. His dad used to joke that Adam has ears like a dog because of the way he can wiggle them, and because of the way certain noises *always* get to him no matter what kind of a mood he's in. Like the whistling. *Is that person ever going to stop whistling?* And the laughter again, *too harsh, too loud, how does anyone concentrate with all the noise…?*

Before he's even thought about it, the chair is pushed back and he's retreating to the one place in the building where he knows he can avoid unnecessary conversations.

The men's restroom on his floor is thankfully unoccupied when he enters and smells only a little strongly of disinfectant. He quickly shuts himself into one of the stalls so no one who walks in will see him just standing there, arms around himself and eyes shut as he focuses on just breathing in and out for a few minutes. He wishes he had his weighted blanket with him and could just tuck himself into some soundproof, invisible corner where no one can find him until he's ready to get up and face people again.

He pictures it in the red darkness behind his eyelids, the darkness that he wishes were pitch black like it is when his head is buried under the blanket, even with his eyes open, not tinged with the harsh white of the buzzing lights overhead. Never mind the lights, he's home, it's dark, he's buried under a handful of pillows and his thick royal blue blanket that's black, *so black,* when the curtains are drawn and he's hidden underneath it. Nigel might be there somewhere, puttering around in the background because it's his night to make dinner but not making too much noise because he knows Adam needs quiet for now in the other room...

"Hey, Adam, you in here?" Mr. Klieber's voice disrupts his pleasant imaginings, jarring him back into the far less pleasant reality. He finds it within himself to stutter out a small yes even though all he really wants is to huddle up into a ball beside the toilet, grimy tiled floor or no.

Mr. Klieber heaves out a sigh that almost seems to echo throughout the overlarge room. "Denise told me she saw you head in here in a hell of a hurry about twenty minutes ago. You should've just told me in the first place you were feeling sick, Adam."

Adam winces in embarrassment at the rather obvious misconception Mr. Klieber and Denise both seem to have. Before he can find the words he needs to form a rebuttal, Mr. Klieber presses on. "I'm sending you home for the day, alright, Adam? Just, uh, just as soon as you're done in here you can clock out and go."

"But I'm, I'm not—"

"Listen, this isn't just for your benefit, okay? I've gotta think of everybody in the office. I can't afford to have anyone else catching whatever it is you've got."

Adam knows Mr. Klieber thinks he has a stomach virus or something along those lines, but the words ring sharply in his head all the same, *can't have anyone else catching whatever it is you've got, whatever you've got, whatever you've got.* Without him realizing it, his hands

come up to cover his ears, fingers curling back almost to meet at the back of his head and tug at his hair, and a tiny pained whimper escapes past his lips.

Mr. Klieber clears his throat but Adam can barely hear it, the sound muffled by his palms. "I'll, uh, leave you to it then," Klieber says, unaware that his words might as well be falling on deaf ears. "Just get some rest. I'll see you when you're feeling better." The bathroom door shuts behind him again with a soft swish as he leaves.

Adam remains there for he isn't sure how long, enough time that when he finally straightens there's a bit of a strain to his neck from having his head bent forward with his hands pushing against the back of it for so long. The pain from tugging at his own hair is grounding enough that at least he feels confident the scream that's been perched under his chin all morning isn't in any danger of climbing up and out of his throat when he steps back out into the hall.

He does as Mr. Klieber told him, signing off on his computer and walking to the front doors with his head down, pretending like he hadn't heard when Denise tells him she hopes he feels better soon on his way out.

When he gets home, he doesn't know what to do with himself. His routine is entirely out of whack. Nigel isn't home yet. There are a few steps of his "coming home" routine he could take care of that don't require it to be evening, so he does those, skipping the shower for now to go straight to putting on his pajamas. Then he makes himself a sandwich, as he might do on a normal day off anyway, the familiarity of that as well reminding him that he should text Harlan to let him know he won't be meeting him for lunch today.

He eats mechanically at the table, too stressed to take the added time to pull out his laptop and watch Inside the Actors Studio today, then washes his plate when he's finished and heads back into the bedroom to pick up his weighted blanket.

Shuffling back into the living room with it bundled up in his arms, Adam curls up comfortably on the couch and wraps it up all around him, covering up his head as well so he can be ensconced in the warm, enclosed darkness like a dragon nestled comfortably in the heart of its lair.

Slowly, slowly the tightly wound tension in his limbs begins to ease as he shuts the rest of the world out. He feels pleasantly adrift yet grounded in place all at once—all he can feel the reassuring pressure and soft fabric of the blanket against his skin, all he can hear the sound of his own breathing, all he can see when he opens his eyes the familiar and comforting black.

He thinks he might have dozed for a bit, when he eventually pokes his head out of the nest he's built on the sofa to feel the cool air of the AC blowing against his face. The sun is a little bit lower in the sky than it was when he first settled in.

He is sitting up with the blanket wrapped around his shoulders by the time he hears the familiar rattle and rasping scrape of Nigel's key entering the lock. When the door opens, his boyfriend looks over at him with an arched brow and says, "You're home early today, gorgeous. Did something happen?"

Adam shakes his head silently, then thinks about it for a moment and answers simply, “Bad day.” A soft smile adorns his lips as he says it, so Nigel can tell it isn’t a bad day anymore, and simply nods without pressing further on the issue.

He knows his sparrow will tell him if there’s anything he wants to talk about, whenever he’s ready to talk about it, so rather than say anything else he merely bends down to press a kiss to the top of Adam’s forehead, and pads silently to the coat closet to hang up his jacket before starting dinner.

Chapter End Notes

Ahh, sweet blessed *catharsis.* Unlike Adam, I didn't get to go home early today and snuggle under my blanket until the world drifted away, but writing about *him* getting to do it makes me feel better, so that's close enough in my book. ^_^

Oblivious (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

Finally getting around to this prompt from 3rdpiece: "I would like to see really thick Will totally oblivious to romantic advances even the not so subtle ones. Maybe featuring Dolarhyde as cockblock since he always wanted the attention that the Chesapeake ripper gave Will or Matt."

I chose Matt for this instead of Dolarhyde because it was easier for me. This takes place in season 1 shortly after Entrée with two important changes you should know: 1) Will does not have encephalitis in this AU, and 2) instead of it just being Jack and Will who go to the BSHCI after the nurse is killed, it's Jack, Will, *and* Hannibal. I needed a feasible excuse for how Matt would meet Hannibal and become interested in him in the first place. What can I say, I take my crack pretty seriously (please, no one take that out of context). :P

Actually, despite the cracky premise, a lot of this actually reads as kind of...sad at first? At least until the end, it gets much better before then, I promise. Let's just say I had a lot of fun with this one. ;D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you sure I cannot tempt you to stay long enough for another glass, Will?” Hannibal asks, fingers of one hand already curled around the delicate neck of the bottle of Syrah they have been sharing since their session ended more than an hour ago.

“I think I’ve had enough already for one evening. Any more and I won’t be able to make the drive home,” Will answers, huffing out a small laugh as he rises from his seat and makes his way over to the divan where he always slings his jacket when he walks in.

“You know that you more than welcome to stay the night over with me anytime,” the psychiatrist practically purrs, wondering as soon as the words leave his mouth where that had even come from. While certainly true, he would normally be more cautious not to say it in such an overtly flirtatious manner, and concludes that perhaps he has already partaken a bit more wine than would normally be prudent himself.

“I appreciate the offer, Doctor Lecter, but I really should be getting home to my dogs,” says Will with a smile so soft and sincere, as though it were a mere innocent suggestion from a friend and not one bordering on tantamount to a proposition, that Hannibal wonders if Will genuinely couldn’t read it as such at all.

Will is gone before he can even ask that the younger man call him Hannibal instead. He feels he should be relieved that Will did not pick up on his more than merely affable intentions

towards him and wonders why he is not.

*

After that, it becomes something of a game, though he cannot say with any satisfaction or certainty whether he is winning or losing. He never thought himself a masochist before this began and now thinks that perhaps he should reconsider that self-assessment.

At first it is a bit of a social experiment, or so he tells himself, a test to discover whether Will has difficulty using his high-powered perception and empathy to discern the feelings and attractions of others toward himself. The answer seems to be yes, which Hannibal finds both rather amusing and charming at first. It becomes one of his new favorite pastimes to encroach on Will's space just a little more often, let his touches linger just a tad longer, let his comments border just shy of being openly flirtatious and peppered with innuendos, all in the name of hoping to garner *some* reaction from the younger man to signify that he has picked up at last on the subtext thrumming underneath their conversations.

Perhaps Will is simply not used to being on the receiving end of many romantic overtures—and more the fool in that case does every individual who has ever laid eyes upon Will Graham and not wished to ravish him utterly on the spot seem, to Hannibal's mind—but not once does Will give any sign of acknowledgement or understanding that his unofficial psychiatrist's interest in him is more than friendly. Oh, he is often rewarded with the loveliest of blushes or quick snorts of amused laughter for his most blatant double entendres, but nothing which suggests Will recognizes it as anything more than a joke, if obviously intentional, or an accidental slip of the tongue if not.

Hannibal realizes he must step it up if he is to have any hope of ever getting Will Graham to give in to his charms. That will mean more invitations to lavish dinners alone in his home to start with, and perhaps a few well-placed gifts as well. He knows Will is more inclined to accept gifts of the practical variety, but those are hardly conducive to romance. He must take care in choosing ones which marry the two concepts well in order to maintain Will's respect for his tastes and thoughtfulness while also making his own intentions more clear.

A quick rap on his door pulls his attention back to the present moment, and he recalls with some mild irritation that he has a new patient scheduled for today. His face betrays nothing, of course, as he opens the door and politely says, "Mr. Brown, please do come in."

He recognizes the orderly immediately upon sight as the one who initially discovered the unfortunate nurse's body after Gideon's unprovoked attack. In light of that recent event, Chilton has oh-so-magnanimously referred members of his staff upon request to both Lecter and Alana Bloom for grief counseling, since he himself could not be bothered to deal with the psychological needs of his own personnel. While not many have taken up on the offer and those who have largely go to Alana since it is more her area of expertise, this young man in particular has insisted upon seeing Hannibal, likely because he was there with Will and Jack to examine the scene and Brown feels more comfortable discussing what he saw with another who has also seen it in person.

After indicating where the young man should sit, Hannibal takes his own seat across from him. The start of their session is so like the usual bland, dull beginning of any doctor-patient

relationship that he finds his thoughts already straying back to what he can get for Will, at least until he asks the seemingly benign question of whether or not Matthew was close with the victim prior to her demise.

“Nope,” the young man answers candidly, a tiny smirk playing on his lips now. “Thought she was kind of a bitch actually.” It’s at least a mildly more interesting answer than Hannibal was expecting, and he allows for the tiniest raise of an eyebrow to indicate as much but no more than that. The younger man seems to take that as encouragement to lean forward in his seat and continue further. Hannibal remains casually leaned against the back of his own chair.

“You ask me, she looked better as a pincushion than she ever did when she was alive. What did *you* think of her?”

“I cannot say since I never had the pleasure of meeting her in life,” Hannibal evades, deftly masking his annoyance at the question. “We are here about your therapy however, Matthew, not mine.” He sincerely hopes that question is not indicative of what their sessions to come will be like. The last thing he wants is another Franklyn Froideveaux on his hands, albeit a slightly less boring one.

Brown seems content to drop the subject for now and move on to other topics, and Hannibal spends the rest of their time together counting the minutes until Will’s appointment this evening.

*

“Dinner was delicious. Thank you, Doctor Lec—*Hannibal,”* Will corrects himself.

“As always, Will, it is my pleasure. I would happily have you every night if you would allow me.” A bit crude perhaps, but his chosen intended’s continued obliviousness makes him bolder and more daring with each passing day.

“You might be happy with that, but my waistline sure wouldn’t be,” Will jokes, any double meaning behind Hannibal’s words as usual flying right over his head.

Hannibal makes yet another double-edged quip, this time about Will’s belt needing help loosening, and feels his frustration mounting higher when even that is met with nothing more than a polite chuckle and not even the hint of a blush. “Will, before you go, I have something for you,” he says, deciding to simply ignore it and move on to phase two of his plan.

With a confused pull of his brows, Will accepts the box being pushed into his hand and opens it. “It’s...cologne,” he says dubiously. The perplexed look is quickly replaced by one of grudging amusement as he doubtlessly recalls the other man’s previous disparaging remarks about his aftershave.

“Far more suitable than any of that ship on the bottle stuff,” Hannibal confirms. Will’s lips quirk up into a smirk before parting to allow a silent huff of laughter to escape.

“Come on, is it really that bad?” he asks.

“This will complement the sweet headiness of your natural scent and draw it out more rather than mask it.”

Will’s mouth works silently for a moment as though trying and failing to formulate a response, and Hannibal’s heart flutters, wondering if this is the reaction he has been waiting for, the moment Will finally puts two and two together.

“Well, I appreciate it, Doctor Lecter. Thank you,” says Will after briefly clearing his throat, slipping forgetfully back into using formal address instead of his first name. Hannibal must tamp down his disappointment.

“You’re quite welcome, dear Will.”

*

“You know, I don’t blame the Chesapeake Ripper for getting all wound up about what Gideon did. Very disrespectful, just blatantly copying another man’s work like that.”

Hannibal hums noncommittally, barely listening as Brown prattles on. He knows he should be showing more concern or at the very least some vague interest in the man’s apparent growing obsession with the Ripper, but he lacks the energy for it, far too despondent of late about the lack of progress being made with the object of his own obsession. Will has yet to show any signs of acknowledgement of Hannibal’s feelings for him, much less reciprocation.

“An homage on the other hand, one that pays its respects to one of his masterpieces rather than blindly forging it, you think that’d be something he’d appreciate?” asks Brown, his gaze pointed. Hannibal contemplates whether or not it would be prudent to eschew the more conventional methods of courtship he has been pursuing of late in favor of crafting instead another gift like the one he made of Cassie Boyle at the beginning of his and Will’s work partnership.

“Doctor Lecter, are you even listening?” Brown’s tone seems agitated for the first time since they have met. Just as Hannibal is about to offer a sincere apology for his inattentiveness—an appalling slide in his own good manners that he can admit richly deserves such chastisement—a sharp rap at the door pulls his attention away again. He feels almost giddy, immediately recognizing whose knock that is, and asks that Matthew excuse him for just a moment as he stands.

“There’s been another body,” Will says in lieu of a proper greeting as soon as Hannibal opens the door, shoulder brushing lightly against the older man’s as he makes his way past him into his office without asking. He sucks in another breath, almost certainly about to say more about this newest victim of the FBI’s latest monster of the week, and appears very nearly to choke on it as he realizes that instant they are not alone in the room.

“I-I-I’m so sorry,” he stammers, blushing bright red now. Oh, how Hannibal would love to trace the lines of that blush with his tongue and his teeth and see where it goes. “Of course, you would be with another patient. I didn’t even *think*—I’m really sorry about this,” he says, addressing himself to Matthew now. He gives no indication that he recognizes the younger man, unsurprising after only one unremarkable encounter during which he was otherwise

engaged with examining Gideon's victim, but Matthew almost certainly recognizes him. The look on his face is coldly impassive and neutral even as he smiles and accepts Will's apology.

"I'll, uh, I'll just be going now," Will mutters to Hannibal, all but squirming in his embarrassment. Hannibal places a hand on his shoulder to halt him in his tracks.

"Please don't go yet. Matthew's hour is almost up anyway. You can sit in the waiting room until we have finished here." For a moment Will seems reluctant to comply, until finally he gives a jerky nod and steps back out, seating himself stiffly in one of the sitting room chairs.

"My apologies for the interruption. Now then, where were we?" Hannibal asks as he returns to his own seat.

Matthew chooses not to answer immediately, his shrewd gaze falling on the bronze statue of the stag halfway between Hannibal's chair and the door across the room.

*

Hannibal has just finished closing up the office for the day and is making the walk to his car when his cell phone rings. The name on the screen makes him smile as he warmly greets his caller.

"Hannibal, I need you," Will says, four words the older man has longed to hear, his tone marvelously urgent, though also disconcertingly distressed. *"How fast can you make the drive to Wolf Trap?"*

"I can be there within the hour if I ignore speed limits. Will, tell me what's wrong."

"It's your patient, you know, that orderly from the hospital?" So Will had recognized Brown after all, Hannibal's mind clinically supplies even as his own uneasiness grows.

"Matthew Brown, yes. Will, is he there? Has something happened?"

"Something happened alright," Will mutters darkly, black humor creeping into his voice as he clarifies. *"He tried to kill me, Hannibal. Now he's dead."*

The phone very nearly slips from his grasp, so great is the mixture of relief and elation thrumming through his veins.

"You should see, it…it's bad. Really bad. I didn't know who else to call," Will admits, his voice tinged with worry again.

"You did the right thing, Will. Don't call anyone else. I am on my way now."

*

"This is not mere self-defense, Will," he says, hearing the echo of his own words to Abigail when she pointed to Nick Boyle's body bleeding out on her parents' living room floor. He feels the same pride now that he had felt then, though just as before, he keeps it deftly hidden.

“I know,” Will says softly. “I guess I got a bit carried away.” He seems almost serene, in stark comparison to the shaking mess he was after taking down Hobbs, and Hannibal finds himself having to physically restrain the urge to sweep the younger man up into his arms and kiss him breathlessly.

“I just remember thinking how glad I was I hadn’t picked the dogs up from Alana’s yet,” Will continues. He had been out of town wrapping up this latest case with Jack and hadn’t known how long he would be gone, opting for that reason to leave them in her care rather than ask someone to make the drive out to his house every day for an indefinite amount of time. “I remember thinking that *over and over and over…”*

Hannibal kneels down to get a better look, ostensibly to check the body though there is clearly no need for it. Matthew Brown’s face is a bloody unrecognizable mess, his neck crooked and bent at an impossible angle. He notices a pistol a few feet away on the floor where it was likely kicked in the struggle. He sees no evidence of shots fired anywhere in the house. “He had a gun with him. Why did he not use it?”

“Because I never gave him the chance to.” Hannibal peers up into Will’s face again and sees the rictus of a grim smile there. “I live on a dirt road. There were tire tracks I didn’t recognize on it. I’m sure it won’t be hard to find where his car is parked hidden in the tree line when we go out to look for it in a minute.” Hannibal suppresses a smile of his own. It would be unfair perhaps to attribute Matthew’s error to a rookie mistake when few people are observant enough as his Will to be able to spot such a simple thing at a glance.

“So you snuck in through the back door and took him by surprise. That does not adequately explain why you chose to beat him to death with your bare hands instead of shooting him yourself.” Of course, Hannibal perfectly understands why and his heart is glad with it. Will chose to kill him this way because he wanted to, and in doing so proved himself the dominant predator in every way. It would have been no easy feat given Brown’s own obvious physical strength, yet there are no marks on Will’s body save for his battered and bloodied hands. Oh, how he wishes he could have witnessed it firsthand. It must have been something fearsome and stunning to behold.

Will shifts his stance, and for the first time Hannibal notices something else on the wood floor behind him, something which displaces some of his joy with no small amount of disquiet. Will follows his gaze and turns as well to look at the taxidermied stag’s head and bottle of lighter fluid behind him. “Oh yes, *that,”* he says, turning back to Hannibal again with the same smile still affixed to his face. “I think he was going to mount me on the antlers and set me on fire,” he says in a remarkably placid tone.

Hannibal swallows, momentarily overcome by a wish that Mr. Brown were still alive so he could eviscerate him himself and listen to his tortured screams. Hidden within that rage though is the same disquiet as before, as he comes to the realization that it was dreadfully careless of him to pay so little mind to the man. “Does this mean he was the copycat killer?” he asks, his mind already working on the best course to misdirect.

Matthew Brown was clearly far cleverer than he gave him credit for, to have made the connection between Hannibal and Cassie Boyle’s murder, not to mention singling Will out as

an apparent rival to be rid of. As if any fate Hannibal had in store for Mr. Brown would have been pleasant had he succeeded in killing Will.

Matthew is not the only clever one though. After a long silence in which Hannibal realizes Will has not answered his question, he carefully rises to his feet and looks up to find Will gazing steadily back at him. A step forward. Two steps. They are close enough now to be nearly touching when the corner of Will's mouth twitches. "You tell me," he whispers.

So it has come to this. Will he be forced to kill Will now, after all the tireless efforts he has made to coax the other to his side, or is there some way he can salvage this? He contemplates this and breathes in deeply through his nose, smiling reflexively, helplessly, perhaps a touch mournfully as he detects a faint hint of vanilla and citrus from the cologne he gave Will.

"My brilliant, remarkable boy," he whispers in kind.

Will's reaction is to make a noise somewhere between an exasperated laugh and a bitter, frustrated growl as he drags an exhausted hand over his own face, which is perhaps not too surprising. What *is* surprising is the next statement that comes out of his mouth.

"For fuck's sake, Hannibal, either *ask me out* already or just kill me, but make up your goddamn mind and *choose* before I lose what little is left of mine!"

*

Panting a bit now as though he has just finished running a mile, because that's about how it feels now that he's *finally* gotten what he's been wanting to say off his chest, it takes a few seconds for Will to realize the blank, frozen expression on Hannibal's face is there because the man has no idea how to react.

Did I just break Hannibal Lecter? he marvels silently to himself, and resists the sudden urge to wave his hand in front of the man's face just to see if his eyes follow. He clears his throat awkwardly and says the man's name again, hoping that'll be enough to get him to snap out of it.

Hannibal blinks and tilts his head to look at him strangely, and Will breathes out a shaky sigh of relief because, *good,* at least that means he isn't catatonic. Wouldn't that be just Will's luck after they've come so far now?

"You knew," Hannibal says softly at last.

He knows it's probably rude and that Hannibal detests rudeness, but that doesn't stop Will from rolling his eyes in the most dramatic fashion possible that a teenage girl would be envious of. "Frankly, I'm *stunned* no one else does. Your fondness for puns is gonna be your downfall one day, you know." Hannibal knits his brows together in mild confusion, but Will plows on ahead without noticing. "Have you ever listened to yourself and counted the number of puns you make about cannibalism during just one dinner? I have. The highest record so far is thirty-seven. *Thirty-seven, Hannibal!* How you can even make that many is beyond me. How you can even make that many *and* not get caught as the Ripper is just proof that the universe is playing a cosmic joke on Jack Crawford, I'm sure."

“Oh, I...was not referring to that actually,” Hannibal responds, clearing his own throat, a look on his face now that cannot be described as anything other than *shy.* “I was actually referring to my, ah, the fact that I have been...”

“Coming on to me every day with all the subtlety of a Mack truck?” Will asks dryly. “Yeah, I noticed that too.”

“Yet you never said a word about it nor gave any indication that you were aware.”

For a brief moment, Will is nearly staggered by the bizarreness that is *his life.* Here they are standing over the cooling corpse of a man Will just murdered, after having also just revealed that he’s known about Hannibal’s deadliest secret for quite some time, yet *this* is the part that Hannibal’s brain has apparently gotten stuck on. “You know, the reason for that *might* have had something to do with that particular discovery coming on the heels of the revelation that my psychiatrist is a cannibalistic serial killer,” he snarks back. “Also, in light of what I know about you, I wasn’t sure whether or not you were just fucking with my head, and didn’t want to make an ass of myself if that was the case.” This last part he mumbles, feeling considerably more timid as the words fall out of his mouth without his permission.

“I see,” is all Hannibal says by way of reply.

“No, I don’t think you do yet,” says Will. “Hannibal, this-this *game* of yours has been driving me up the wall for *weeks!”* he snaps, all the exasperation he’s felt since this began coming to the forefront at last, eager to be expelled. “Do you have any idea how hard it’s been *not* to rise to the bait, especially with how *obvious* you’ve been making it this entire time?”

Hannibal has the gall to sniff delicately at that as though offended. “Will, I believe you are exaggerating,” he says.

“You remember last Thursday?” Will asks, stepping closer. “When I said you should let me take you out to a restaurant so you could have a night off from cooking, and you *pretended* you were so tired you forgot the proper order of words in English and told me you would *‘relish the opportunity to eat me out’?”*

He giggles, almost hysterically, and adds, “You know, the worst part of that for me was I couldn’t be certain *how* you meant it. For all I knew, you could have been making a dirty joke, or you could have been waxing poetic about scooping my organs out and serving them in your next dish.” He shrugs as if it hardly makes a difference. “With you, who can tell?”

“I did not realize my flirting would lead to such complications between us. Forgive me, Will.”

“No, don’t *apologize,”* Will says, shaking his head. “Just put me out of my misery and tell me which one it is you actually *want—”*

The last of his words gets lost as Hannibal forcefully shoves him back against the nearest wall, hands sliding up the younger man’s shirt to feel up the smooth skin underneath while his tongue greedily plunders the inside of Will’s mouth.

When their lips part at last after several minutes, both of them now gasping for breath, he asks, “Does that clarify things for you?”

Will nods his head rapidly, before weaving his fingers tightly in the other man’s hair and tugging him closer to slot their mouths back together and continue where they left off.

They only stop again because the body must be properly dismantled and stored before the meat spoils. It seems only right, after all, that the pig which brought them to this moment of finally breaking down the barriers of communication between them not be left to go to waste.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, you caught me, I deliberately reinterpreted "oblivious Will" as *seemingly* oblivious Will instead. It just came out as much funnier that way to me. #sorrynotsorry xD

Soulmates (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

> tfbl requests: Will and Hannibal are 1,000 + years old and have been together for centuries. In the past two hundred years or so although they are still in love with each other they have separated (why is up to you) and have not had any contact up until the meeting in Jack's office. Both are blindsided by this meeting and the rest of cannon that follows is Will and Hannibal working to rebuild their relationship and the trust and closeness they once had in one another. (Murder Husbands eventually, if a Soulmate Tattoo thing could be squeezed into this it'd be mega awesome)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will takes a sip of his watery instant coffee, hoping it will help to wash out the other bad taste that sits on his tongue as he waits for Jack to return with his new *fellow consultant,* not wanting to make it too obvious from the start how insulted he is that Crawford trusts his input so little as to require a second opinion when he was the one who harassed and harangued Will into joining his team after he'd already said no in the first place.

He straightens in his chair when he hears Jack's booming voice through the door behind him, not bothering to turn around and look until he also hears the click of the door opening.

"Doctor Lecter, I'd like to introduce you to your consulting partner, Will Graham. Will, this is Doctor Hannibal Lecter," Jack says as he walks in, stepping aside to allow the two of them to see and assess one another.

Will considers it a small miracle when the mug in his hand doesn't slip through his numb fingers and spill hot coffee all over his lap. An itch long gone ignored right over his heart now flares and burns brightly as he takes in the sight before him, and it feels *oh-so wonderful* and *awful* both all at once.

He hadn't prepared himself for it. Hadn't expected it to happen any time soon at all. Neither, judging from the telltale though near imperceptible widening of his eyes, had Hannibal.

It is still no surprise when he is the first to recover from their mutual shock. "Hello Will," he says, taking an incremental step forward, and Will knows it for an act, knows that it is taking every ounce of control the man has not to swoop in and grab onto him tightly. He knows because it is taking every bit of his own control as well not to jump up out of his chair and launch himself into the man's arms, that burning pain on his chest intensifying as though the mark branded there is trying to break free of his skin and reach out with sharp, jagged tendrils for its twin.

It's as though not a day has passed since they last parted ways. Not a day, yet still a small eternity.

"Hello Hannibal," he answers in kind. Silently, he applauds himself for the steadiness of his voice.

Crawford looks from one man to the other, an expression on his face that seems at once perplexed and consternated. "You two know each other?" he asks, able to pick up on the obvious even if he cannot make heads or tails of the full situation or even begin to understand just how loaded of a question that is. "Doctor, why didn't you say something before?" he goes on, addressing Hannibal directly now.

"Yes, Will and I are very old acquaintances, Jack," says Hannibal, glossing over a storied past and intimate shared history that would take far longer than however much time this meeting is supposed to last to explain fully, if either of them were inclined to do so, which they are most assuredly not. "I am afraid I was not aware this was the same Will Graham you had spoken of when you mentioned him in my office," he explains. Neither of them bothers to mention, of course, that this is largely in part because *Graham* is not the alias Will was using when Hannibal saw him last, no more than Lecter was Hannibal's own.

"How many Will Grahams could there possibly be with his particular, er, skillset?" Jack grumbles, mostly to himself it seems. Will is too caught up in the moment to even be annoyed with the way Jack talks about him like he's not there, and apparently talks to others about him *when* he's not there.

Hannibal sits, finally, in the chair beside Will as Jack takes his own seat on the other side of the desk, and Will is struck suddenly by the fact that the love of his life is *right there,* less than an arm's length away. He could reach out and touch without getting up from his chair now, but still he doesn't, still he holds back. It's all he can do not to stare, but he has to look away, has to keep his eyes on Jack as he speaks, or the bulletin board, literally *anything* but the man radiating warmth and familiarity and *aching want* mere inches away from him, lest the temptation become too much to bear.

It's all he can do to keep his attention on the topic hand, and it doesn't help when Hannibal does what he always does best; he derails Will completely, in a matter of just a few words, under the peculiar guise of asking how Will has been faring since he saw him last in a way that asks far more than Jack Crawford could possibly realize.

"I imagine even now what you see and learn still touches everything else in your mind, as it always has. No forts yet in the bone arena of your skull for the things you love?" he says, turning the last statement into a question.

He recognizes his mistake in asking only in the second that Will stiffens, for the moment unable to breathe, as it comes rushing back to Will *why* they haven't seen each other in such a very, very long time. Why Will had sworn to himself that he did not *want* to see Hannibal again for a very long time, perhaps ever.

He stands abruptly, ignoring Jack's barked order that he sit back down as well as Hannibal's worried murmur of his name, and after making some terse excuse about needing to go to

class walks just as quickly out of the room.

“Will,” Hannibal calls after him mere seconds later, and if Will were in a better mood he would find it amusing to think of the fussy, usually unfailingly polite man sparing little more than a blurted excuse to Crawford before chasing immediately after him. “Will!”

Will ducks into the nearest empty room he can find and leaves the door ajar for the other man to follow, not wanting to have this confrontation in the middle of the open hallway where anybody can happen by.

“Will, I must apologize,” the man says softly as soon as he enters, shutting the door behind him. “It was not my intention to ambush you in such a way.”

Will breathes in deeply through his nose with his back still turned to him, allowing his eyes to slide shut for a moment before he turns around and says, “I know. It was just…too much to handle, right there in front of Jack.”

Hannibal takes a step forward until they are almost, though not quite, touching. “I suppose I have my answer though, judging by how quickly you fled the room,” he says. “You are still angry.”

“No, No, I’m not—” Will shakes his head, voice barely above a whisper as he speaks. He doesn’t know what he feels anymore honestly. Truth be told, he hasn’t allowed himself to think much on the reason for their separation, not in all this time. For the most part, he has merely coasted along, doing his best to distract himself from the loneliness and the memories.

The pain, after long years ignored and shoved down like an unwanted coat stuffed at the very bottom of a dusty chest of drawers, is staggering now as all the things he has tried to forget get pushed back to the forefront of his thoughts.

He would startle at the brush of fingers along his cheek, if it did not feel so right, so familiar and necessary, easing the painful burn of his mark for the first time since they laid eyes on each other again. His eyes drift to where Hannibal’s own mark must still be through the layers of clothing, still directly over his own beating heart just like Will’s. He wonders if it has been just as painful for the other man to bear as his own has been, almost winces at his own thoughtlessness because *of course,* of course it has. He doesn’t even need to ask.

“There were times I almost despaired of ever seeing you again,” Hannibal admits softly, and Will squeezes his eyes shut again because he *knows,* and the knowing hurts like nothing else does. “You left with no way for me to contact you.”

“I’m sorry,” Will says. “I just…I needed time.”

“I understand,” says Hannibal. “I need to know, however, if you can find it within yourself to forgive me yet.”

Will sucks in another sharp breath and opens his eyes. “I can’t…I have to think about it. I can’t have this conversation right now though, not here.” He takes a step back and Hannibal allows his hand to fall back to his side, though Will can see it pains him to do so. The feeling

is mutual. The mark flares up again, this time even more ardently than before now that it has had a taste of what it's been missing for nearly three hundred years.

Will clears his throat and tries his best to ignore it. "I wasn't lying when I said I had class in a few minutes. I really should get going."

"Will I see you again?" Hannibal asks, as if he fears the other will disappear the moment they are out of each other's sight once more. It would make Will smile if it didn't break his heart just a little.

"Of course. We have a job to do together in Minnesota, remember?" Hannibal smiles, a fragile, hopeful thing, and gives a tiny nod before quietly exiting the room and leaving Will to his teaching.

Will has never experienced such a mixture of dread with giddy anticipation at the prospect of door-to-door interviews.

*

What Hannibal and Will are does not have a proper name. Not anymore at least, not in any known language currently in use. They have been mistaken for many things over the passing centuries, millennia even—heralded as heroes of legend, sometimes even deities. Most recently—though centuries ago now—they have been accused as witches. Will supposes this is the closest humanity has ever gotten to really understanding the truth.

There is magic in the world, and the two of them are perhaps the last keepers of its existence. What Will can do, peering into the very souls of others to learn their secrets, is magic. What Hannibal can do, insinuating himself into people's hearts and minds until he can commit almost the most heinous crimes imaginable in front of them without them so much as batting an eye, is also magic. Even the curious marks like tattoos, pulsating in the shape of thorny antlers branched in a vicelike grip over both their hearts, is a particular type of magic unique to them, one which binds them together even now, no matter the number of years they have been absent from each other's presence.

And what their daughter could do was so much greater even than all of that, combining the best of both of her fathers' traits and making the special brand of magic she wielded unique and all her own. Their beautiful, precious girl, erased from existence like she was never there, back in the early half of the eighteenth century.

The irony of that was the witch hunts were supposed to be over by that point, with only a few outlying places still clinging to their darker traditions. A new era of skepticism, or at the very least cautious, hopeful mistrust of past superstitions, had slowly been displacing the old ways. In earlier centuries, Will and Hannibal used to laugh over some of the ridiculous beliefs humanity held about those it called "witches" and what should be done to rid the world of them.

After what happened, neither of them found humor in it anymore.

*

Breakfast in the hotel room is shared with a strictly professional discussion of the case at hand, almost maddeningly polite. That is, until it's not.

"I trust you got my message?" Hannibal asks as he spears another forkful of Cassie Boyle's lungs before bringing it to his lips. Will's grip around his own fork tightens minutely, then relaxes once more.

"I knew that had to be you. No one else would dedicate so much work into putting together that level of...*field kabuki,"* Will says with a wry smirk. "Yes, I did. Message received." When Hannibal only continues to look at him without giving a response, Will sighs and says aloud what they're both thinking, though it pains him to do so and Hannibal *knows that.* "He has a...he has a daughter. A daughter whom he loves *to death."* His wry smile remains, albeit shaking a bit now. "I had trouble seeing it on my own, so thank you. For helping me."

Hannibal merely nods in acknowledgement to the thanks. "Were you having trouble because you could not see it, or because you didn't wish to?"

"Dammit, Hannibal," Will says, raising his voice slightly as he lets his fork clatter to the table.

The look that crosses Hannibal's features is genuinely contrite as he lowers his own fork, head bowed, swallowing lightly.

"You were right," he says at last quietly. Before Will can do more than furrow his brows, trying to parse what that means, Hannibal stands only to come around to Will's side of the table and kneel to the floor, laying his forehead against Will's knee as if in supplication. Shocked, Will's fingers have tangled into the man's hair before he is even aware of it.

"You were right," Hannibal repeats, lifting his head far enough now to gaze up at Will through eyes glistening through a sheen of unshed tears. "I failed in my duties as a husband and a father. I failed you both."

"No!" Will exclaims, choking on the word through a horrified sob that wants to escape. "Is that why you thought I-*no. No, no, no, no,"* he repeats over and over," cradling the man's face between both hands. "It wasn't your fault. I didn't mean that when I said it was, I was just...I was just *hurting so much,"* he says. "I lashed out. I'm so sorry. *Please forgive me."*

"It was my fault though, beloved," Hannibal says, holding fast to Will's hands against his cheeks as though terrified the other man will tear them away the moment he accepts what Hannibal is saying as truth. "I should never have let her go to the village on her own."

"As if you could have stopped her. As if either of us could," Will says, smiling in spite of how much he badly wants to cry. "Our headstrong, stubborn girl."

"Stubborn just like both of her fathers," Hannibal says, pushing himself straighter up in his kneeling position now while Will bends forward, so they can press their foreheads together and just breathe in the air of each other's lungs.

"I missed you both so much, all these long years," he admits, and that is what pushes Will over the edge, allowing the tears he's been holding back to fall in ugly streaks down his face, Hannibal's own finally unleashing as well shortly after.

"So did I," Will croaks, then drags their lips together in a harsh, clumsy kiss. It tastes like salt, their faces blotched and tacky with tears and snot, perhaps the most unattractive and least sexual kiss two lovers can share, but neither of them cares about that. After literal centuries apart, holding back, holding it all in, it feels so good to finally have this release.

It feels so good to be home again.

*

Though it takes some time to clean themselves up and feel like doing anything besides holding onto each other for the rest of the morning, professionalism eventually wins out and the two of them clamber into Will's car to conduct interviews at all the construction companies whose pipe threaders match the markings on the metal shavings Katz found on Elise Nichols' body.

They get lucky on their very first stop. The name Garret Jacob Hobbs tugs at Will in a way he can't logically explain to anyone other than Hannibal, because even in this "modern" era with all its trappings of civility he would never dare admit that his abilities often pull more from what would be considered the supernatural rather than mere simple deductive reasoning.

They leave for the Hobbs residence right away, his fingers drumming impatiently over the steering wheel the whole way there. Magic dances and crackles invisibly under his skin, his body thrumming with nervous excitement for reasons he cannot name. One glance at Hannibal in the passenger seat beside him tells him the other man feels it too.

The car has barely pulled to a stop in the driveway before a tall blonde woman is being forcibly shoved out the front door, thick gouts of blood spurting out of the open gash across her neck. The two of them are out of the car and almost at the front porch already before she falls down to the ground.

Will kicks down the door and races after the woman's assailant, firearm raised in both hands and pointed ahead.

"Garret Jacob Hobbs, FBI!" he calls out. He enters the kitchen and sees Hobbs holding a girl hostage in front of him, whispering words of madness and adoration even as he holds the knife poised against her throat.

No, not *a* girl. *The* girl. The only girl in the world who matters. The only girl he would have torn the world apart to find, had he only known to look. Her name falls from his lips before he can stop himself, *"Abigail."*

"Dad," she says in kind, the same surprise on her face and tears in her eyes, though her mouth starts to crook into the tiniest of smiles as if even in this moment, she has found a reason to feel glad.

“No, *no!”* Hobbs mutters, crazed and confused. Upon looking closer, Will realizes the man’s eyes are glazed and spell-fogged from too many glamours. “You can’t have her. She’s my daughter, *mine!”*

“Like hell she is,” Will says, and fires right as Hobbs moves to drag the blade across Abigail’s throat. Righteous fury takes over and he keeps firing again and again *and again* until the chamber at last is completely empty.

“Dad. *Daddy!* It’s okay, you can stop now, he’s dead. *See?”* With far more equanimity than any teenager should feel after having their life threatened like that, she reaches over and pushes Hobbs’ slumped over head up far enough to show the spark of life is completely gone from his eyes.

The gun in Will’s hand clatters to the floor as he drops it carelessly, coming closer to this creature who couldn’t possibly be—yet unmistakably *is*—his child. *“H-how…?”* he hears himself ask, hand reaching but not quite touching, not daring to as if fearing she will melt out of existence the moment he tries.

She closes that gap herself, stepping into the circle of his arms and wrapping her own around him in a tight hug with happy tears in her eyes. “Turns out it takes more than being burnt at the stake to kill one of us after all,” she says.

He finally rediscovers the ability to move after the shock and wraps his own arms just as tightly around her. He can’t tell if they’re both trembling right now or if it’s just him.

“Will, is everything alright?” calls Hannibal, concern evident in his voice after hearing gunshots in the house but no other sounds of commotion or signs of his lost love returning to him outside. He stops in the kitchen doorway, his knees nearly buckling out from under him at the sight that greets him there. *“Abigail,”* he says in that same awed voice Will had used.

“Hi, Papa,” she says, meeting his eyes over Will’s shoulder. No force could stop him then from striding forward and drawing both of them into his own arms, too stunned and overjoyed to use English, uttering words instead in a language more than twice as old as the girl standing between them who is herself far, far older than she seems to the naked eye.

When Will mutters something back in the same out-of-use tongue, Abigail rolls her eyes and says in modern words, “Guys, stop. You know I hate it when you talk over me like this.”

This sparks laughter from both men, the attitude in her voice the strongest proof they could need that this could be no one but the daughter they thought they had lost. If there are tears mixed in with that laughter once more, well, that is perhaps only to be expected.

*

While they wait for local law enforcement to arrive, she explains quickly how she has survived all this time, describing first how she had awakened what may have been days or weeks or years for all that she knew after her seeming demise under piles of grave dirt and clawed her way out, her skin still blackened and cracked once she climbed out of her grave and had a chance to look. Dad’s hand squeezes hers tightly when she says this and Papa

stares blankly ahead at the wall as if he doesn't know how to respond. She moves on quickly past that point, not wanting either of them to dwell on the pain she suffered and blame themselves for it. She tells them she realized right away that they must have believed her truly dead, so she struck out on her own, using her magic to convince strangers she was a relative or a dear old friend so they would take her in while she healed.

"I looked for you guys, of course," she says, "but I honestly started to doubt I was ever going to see you again." Both of her fathers hug her tightly again at this statement.

"I guess that's why this time I let the illusion go on so much longer than I should have," she admits quietly. "I knew it was starting to mess with his head too much and making him crazy, constantly renewing the glamour that told him I was his daughter and he loved me, but…I wanted family again and I thought this was the closest I'd ever get."

Will kisses the top of her head gently, and Hannibal says, "You need never worry about losing us again, little one. Now that we are all back together, nothing else will ever tear this family apart."

Will and Hannibal meet each other's gazes as he says this. Will gives a tiny nod and takes Hannibal's hand in his, and together the three of them sit on the couch until the cops arrive, each of them thinking on all they thought they had lost and vowing never to let anyone take it from them again.

The End.

Chapter End Notes

~~Gah, what is this purple prose, melodramatic mess, I'm sorry. Emotions ran too damn high throughout this fic, I couldn't write it any other way.~~ #noregrets

tfbl, you asked for "adopted" Abigail in a follow-up comment, but I headcanoned her as their blood-related daughter instead. Whether that means mpreg or magic murder blood ritual where **poof** a baby suddenly appeared is up for interpretation I guess. ¯_(ツ)_/¯

Soulmates sequel (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

tfbl requested a glimpse into Will, Hannibal, and Abigail's lives following the aftermath of Hobbs' death and their reunion in the previous prompt. It's short, more of a mini-epilogue than anything else really, but here it is, my dear! ^_^

UPDATE Hey guys, I can't believe I forgot to mention this sooner, but even though my time writing this soulmates AU is done, my prompter and I would love to see someone else pick it up if they're interested. If you think you might be interested in adopting the soulmates AU (or even just writing a few snippets here and there), please let tfbl or myself know so we can give you more details! ^_^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The real test of Hannibal's abilities lies in convincing Bloom and Crawford that Abigail does not need to be boarded at a psychiatric facility.

With Crawford, it is relatively simple to point out that the girl can be monitored more closely in a comfortable environment one-on-one with someone whose professional opinion the man trusts. Alana Bloom, on the other hand, is a more complicated individual, one who requires a delicate touch when it comes to subtle machinations, especially as Hannibal is loath to overuse glamours with those he considers respected friends.

Alana is insistent that staying with one of the men who rescued her from her father cannot be healthy for Abigail Hobbs, that she should be in a psychiatric facility instead and attending sessions with a group of her peers. Hannibal would be inclined to agree were Abigail an ordinary girl. She is not, however. She is his daughter, and he and Will will both be damned before they let anyone separate her from her true family again.

It takes much coaxing and persuasion to convince the woman not to interfere with his plans to move Abigail into his home, on the condition that she be allowed to interview Abigail herself once every two weeks to make sure the girl is settling in well. It is so endearing and amusing to see how protective these mortals can be of a girl who is, in fact, several centuries their elder. Meanwhile, Hannibal secretly petitions for he and Will to be named as her legal guardians as well so no one may attempt to wrest her from them.

It will be at least a few months yet before Will can officially move in with them as well, so as not to arouse suspicion regarding how quickly these "strangers" have formed themselves into a family unit. At least Crawford and now Bloom as well are aware of his and Will's previous acquaintanceship, which makes the transition much easier. It is simple enough to let slip fragments of the truth, that they are estranged former lovers who have decided to make a go of it again after a chance reunion.

For now, Will must keep his house in Wolf Trap and commute to Baltimore in the evenings, which is just as well since it will take some time for Hannibal to make his own property more dog-friendly.

Even then, despite all their precautions, the time may come sooner than planned that they will have to move on and change identities once again. But at least this time, they'll all go together.

*

"You have so many!" says Abigail, delighted as she steps out of the Bentley to be greeted by seven eager canines. Will steps down from the porch, bare-footed, both hands in the front pockets of his jeans. He is every bit as breathtaking to behold as the day Hannibal met him.

"For a long while, they were all I had to distract me from the loneliness," Will admits, a bit too honest perhaps, but in the presence of his soulmate and his only child it is difficult for him to be anything otherwise.

Abigail's smile falters a bit at the reminder. She had not taken the news well when her parents had told her of their previous separation, blaming herself as the cause of it.

To dispel that unhappiness and reassure her once again, Will pulls her in close for a tight hug, then releases her so he can wrap his arms around his husband next and lean up for a breathless kiss. It does seem to make her relax a bit, and with a sharp whistle she calls the dogs to her and starts running wildly across the field with them, giggling like the child she still is despite the long years and letting her hair blow about however it will in the wind.

The two men stay near the car and watch her. It may be a bit awkward for all of them for some time yet, but even now despite the centuries, they are already adapting to being whole again. For Will, it's enough. More than enough. It's all he ever wanted.

It's beautiful.

Chapter End Notes

The next update will be my last prompt fic but just to be clear, I *will* still be adding new stories to this collection and Ad Noctem. I just need a break from requests as I work on some new ideas I have for awhile. :P

Angels on High (spacedogs au)

Chapter Notes

> KitsuneMagicJNC requested a mobster!Nigel kidnaps priest!Adam story. ;) Apologies in advance to my Catholic readers--I did my best to keep it respectful and as accurate as possible, but if there are any glaring issues, please be sure to let me know!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hello again, Father Adam," says the man from Bucharest, a crooked grin revealing his uneven teeth and an unlit cigarette dangling from his lower lip.

"Hello, Nigel," the younger man greets. "I told you before, I'm not a Father yet. I am only a deacon until my ordination."

"Right, right, of course. So that means you're not bound by the same rules, doesn't it? Since you haven't taken your priestly vows yet?" the other man asks, making the question seem suggestive somehow, though suggestive of what, Adam can't quite place his finger on.

"I suppose it does," he answers cautiously.

"Good to know," is all the other man replies, for at that moment Sister Marjorie steps out from Father Daniel's office, a disapproving frown on her features as soon as she spots Nigel, Adam assumes because of the cigarette though the man had been considerate enough to remember not to light it this time. Nigel waves vaguely at her with a curious smirk on his face, then with a parting wink at Adam moves to take his seat at his usual pew.

During Mass, Adam gives his ministry of the Word, the proclamation of the Gospel, as is always his duty. It is the only part of the services their mysterious Romanian visitor ever seems to pay any attention to, aside from the Holy Communion. Then, Nigel waits patiently in line with all the rest, to kneel and accept the Body and Blood of Christ from Deacon Adam's hand.

Though he has done this many times before, something about the way Nigel looks at him as his thumb brushes the man's lip to place the wafer on his tongue always makes Adam blush and have to dart his eyes away.

*

"Little sparrow, is this really what you want to be doing with your life?"

Adam looks up, startled from his reading. He is taking a break on a bench in one of the hidden back hallways behind the offices where he is fairly certain parishioners are not

supposed to go, but as usual Nigel seems to hold a blatant disregard for any and all implied rules.

"I'm afraid I don't understand the question," Adam replies after a bit of mental backpedaling to piece together the man's words. There had been a bit of a delay in puzzling together the first half of the sentence until he realized *'little sparrow'* was evidently some new nickname Nigel had designated to him. The man did that sometimes instead of referring to him by his name and title, and Adam, being unsure what the protocol should be on whether or not to allow it, chose simply to ignore it.

"The priesthood," Nigel answers. "Is that really what you want?"

Adam blinks. No one has ever asked him that before. The nuns who raised him at the orphanage he grew up in always talked about his imminent vows as though they were simply a given, always lauding him in front of the other children as a "pure soul" because he was never disobedient and easily memorized the biblical passages and parochial lessons set before him. It had seemed the most sensible career choice; Adam liked the ritual and routine of the Church and its rigid strictures.

"The Church is my life. It's all I've ever known."

"Yet here you are, dreaming of bigger things," says Nigel, indicating the well-worn, dog-eared book in Adam's lap, Hawking's *The Universe in a Nutshell,* with a knowing grin. Adam clutches the book more tightly in his hand.

"Science and religion are not incompatible as most people would assume," Adam defends. "I always liked to think of it as one of them explains *how* the universe works the way it does while the other explains the *why."* He stands. "Have you ever looked up at the stars, Nigel?" he asks, a smile playing on his lips. "Looking up at the celestial beauty of the heavens, it's a wonder to me sometimes that there can be anyone who believes God does not exist."

"I know exactly what you mean, angel," Nigel whispers, looking at Adam the way he often does but also…*more,* somehow.

"I-if you'll excuse me," Adam stammers, not entirely sure why he suddenly feels so flustered and agitated but certain that he needs to get away. He scurries off before the other man can say another word, refusing even to look back and risk seeing the disappointment there.

*

The next time he and Nigel meet, it is well past midnight, the stars are very bright out, and Adam is sitting on the rooftop of the rectory gazing up at them. Pleased and surprised by the older man's sudden appearance, Adam climbs down to greet him.

"Hello, Nigel. What are you doing out here so late?"

"I have come to give my confession, Father."

“Nigel, I’m only a deacon. I can’t take your confession. This also is not the place for it,” Adam says, drawing his zipped up sweater tighter around himself.

“Trust me, this one you’ll want to hear,” the other says, stepping closer into Adam’s space until the younger man’s back is against the wall of the building.

“Adam, I am a very bad man,” he begins. “My line of work is less than legal, let’s say. I’ve done bad fucking things to bad fucking people, and I’ve enjoyed the hell out of it. But for all that, my biggest sin, at least to the eyes of an uptight cunt like Sister Marjorie, would be this,” he says, and swoops down without warning to capture Adam’s lips with his own.

The younger man gasps, allowing Nigel to plunder deeper and more greedily with his tongue. Adam moans around it, arms coming up to twine around Nigel’s shoulders without his own conscious decision. He lets out a shaky breath when the other finally pulls back just far enough to allow it.

“Nigel!” he squeaks out. “You-you can’t just—”

“I can,” the man rebuts, laying another soft peck at the corner of Adam’s mouth. “I did.” Another peck at the other corner. “And what’s more, angel, I’m taking a plane back to Bucharest tonight, and you’re coming with me.” Another gentle kiss, laid right over the bow of Adam’s mouth. “I’ll not take no for an answer, darling.”

“Nigel…” Adam whispers, shivering, at a loss for any other words.

“Am I gonna have to throw you over my shoulder and carry you off, darling?” Nigel asks playfully, breaking into another grin when Adam nods his head rapidly. With a rough, possessive growl, he does exactly that and walks, the lighter man slung over his shoulder protesting only weakly at best, all the way to his getaway car.

Chapter End Notes

If you missed my belated note on the last update, the soulmates AU (i.e., the story 'verse that chapters 11 and 12 take place in) is now up for adoption to any interested writers. If you would like to continue that 'verse or contribute stories to it, please let tfbl or myself know so we can send you more details! ^_^

Nakama (hannigram)

Chapter Notes

> Was reorganizing my files and found this short and sweet little post-fall scene I wrote years ago for this collection but apparently forgot to ever publish, whoops! After a bit of quick editing and a whole lot of dusting, here it finally is, about three or four years late.
>
> An alternative title would be *Oops, All Berries!* or *Dang It! Not Another Post-Fall Fic Where They're On A Boat, And Also Chiyoh Is There Doing More Than Her Fair Share Of The Work, As Always*

He'd come to in the cramped cabin space of a small boat—his boat, to be precise, the *Nola*. He had recognized it right away even in the dark, all those lonely months of just him and the Atlantic flooding back to him. It is exactly as he remembered leaving it at the port of Palermo, before he'd gone inland up and up all the way to Lithuania, sans the layers of cobwebs and dust that should be present after years of disuse. It's been maintained.

He had been both surprised and not when it was Chiyoh who came below deck a few minutes later—shaking the rain from a long, slick overcoat left to hang on a hook by the main cabin door—and walked on booted heels to check over his wounds and redress them as needed with quick, clinical efficiency, not a word spoken between them despite it being apparent that he was awake now. She didn't even tell him to sit up or move, just tugged him around the same way she must have done while he was unconscious, and Will let her. He didn't know what else to do.

By the time he'd almost worked up the nerve to at least make some dry quip about how she got the boat here—he knows she couldn't have followed them from Florence in this thing and still been there in time to pick up Hannibal and the paralyzed but still-then conscious Will in his arms from the side of the road leading away from Verger's estate—she had stood up from her kneel at his side and made her way across the room to do the same for Hannibal, still asleep in the cabin's only actual bed. Will's mind worked ponderously slow in those first moments of consciousness, but he had noticed that he was on one of two mattresses shunted to one side on the floor. Did she keep hers nearby on purpose to keep a close eye on Will and make sure he wouldn't try anything in the night? Perhaps, but it could also just be due to the limited space.

There is so little he knows about the woman honestly. He doesn't even know where she's been all this time. She has no last name, none that she gives out at any rate, and seems to have nothing to that short name save for what she subsists on from the land and borrows for a time from others—the Lecter estate, her home as well as her voluntary prison, and this boat. Perhaps she was staying at the cliff house too, politely vacating once she saw him and Hannibal approaching in their stolen vehicle from a distance, thus explaining their second

timely rescue at her hands from the aftermath of violence and frenzy. That would make this the second time Will has unintentionally gate-crashed into her world as well, supplanting her from yet another Lecter property on which she had been sort of squatting but with Hannibal's permission for years. Will can't say he blames her for resenting his company in the least.

Now they sit across from each other at the table sipping coffee together, reminiscent of the teatime they'd shared when she'd said that all sorrows could be borne through a story, or was it Will who'd said that first? As with Hannibal, he has difficulty remembering from whose mind certain ideas originated, and Will has never quite been able to help the way he bleeds into others. It's not the only familial resemblance between her and the man lying a few feet away from them in bed—and it is that, for she is Hannibal Lecter's nakama after all, his family in all but blood and name. They also share a penchant for quietly soft-spoken words of eerie poetry. (So does Will, always has, but the implications of that are something he still hasn't fully reconciled within himself comfortably just yet. He's not sure he ever will be wholly comfortable with it.)

So it is something of a surprise to him again when her first words to him, delivered dryly over her second cup of French roast, are simply, "So you're still an idiot, I see."

It startles a laugh out of him, a quiet one, so as not to wake the other man. "Um, yeah, I guess so. Guilty as charged," he says, taking another sip from his own mug.

"You both could have died, idiot," she points out, less amused. He's not surprised by the confirmation that she was watching from a distance, through the scope of her rifle most likely, though he does have to wonder what kept her finger off the trigger this time. He also doesn't point out right back that, to at least a part of his mind, dying had been rather the point. As he is not dead or dying right now and rather likes the feeling, he would prefer not to tell her that much lest she shoot him again. Or toss him bodily from the deck of his own boat the way she pushed him off the train. He's not sure he could muster up the energy or the will to fight back in self-defense, and honestly, he's a little terrified of her.

"You still refuse to listen to what I told you," Chiyoh says. "When I said there were other means of influence."

"Well, you did throw me off a train right after you said it," Will quips back. "Sort of negates all the rest, if you ask me."

"That was part of the message," she rejoins, a little amused again. Clearly at least one of them finds the memory enjoyable. He still can't really blame her. From a certain point of view, he supposes it is rather funny. And for what he did back at Lecter Manor, he kind of deserved it.

"Before that, you kissed me," he throws out there, not realizing until he hears his own voice as he says it that he's more offended by that part than all the rest. She frowns slightly, hearing it as well.

"I did. It was also to make a point, but nonetheless, I apologize." He's not surprised she would consider *that* worthy an apology but not what came after, either. She takes another slow, smooth sip of her coffee and looks back at him consideringly. "You allowed the kiss,"

she says after a moment. “Went along with it, in fact, despite no desire for it.” Chiyoh narrows her eyes in thought. “For a man who craves a soft touch so much you’ll accept one even from a stranger you do not want and suspect of using you, you do not put much softness back into the world yourself.”

“Jesus,” Will mutters, wincing. He tries and fails not to think of Margot, of his clutch for balance with Alana before, even in some ways of Molly, the kinds of *soft touch* he sought despite knowing they would all in one way or another end badly for him and others, whether as a one-time hookup or the start of something more. “You don’t also happen to have a degree in psychoanalysis, do you?” he asks warily.

Chiyoh’s lips twitch up at that briefly. At least she has more of a sense of humor than he seems to remember, which makes the thought of their cramped quarters together slightly more bearable.

“I…should also apologize,” he tries after a minute. “For what led up to that—”

“Stop,” she halts him with a gentle hand motion. “You do not regret what you did, and therefore, I don’t want to hear it.” Fair enough. She and Will are a bit alike as well then, in that regard.

Still, because he wouldn’t be Will Graham if he could ever just *stop prodding,* “Don’t know, I’m pretty sure I regret paying for that second train ticket now.” This earns him an actual eye roll.

A soft groan behind him. He and Chiyoh both turn to look, but Hannibal is still unconscious, making discontented noises in his sleep. Will is up before he even has time to think about what the hell he’s doing, and Chiyoh hovers warily nearby, watching him.

“Shhh, it’s okay. I’m here. Chiyoh’s here. Everything’s okay,” he murmurs, sliding his own coffee-warmed hand into Hannibal’s clammy one with a lump in his throat. And wonder of wonders, the other man actually does settle back down into a more restful sleep.

“What will you do,” Chiyoh asks, “now that your violence has failed you yet again?”

Will looks back between her and Hannibal, whose hand he has not let go of yet. He squeezes lightly and feels something that seems horribly, remarkably, fantastically like relief when the other man’s fingers squeeze weakly back. “I guess…I’m going to try your advice now.”

Chiyoh continues to gaze at him for longer, possibly trying to gauge his honesty. After a minute, she turns without another word to him and steps back out onto the deck.

Will decides to kneel by Hannibal’s bedside a little while longer, ignoring the cold seeping into his protesting knees. He swipes a thumb over knuckles still clasped loosely in his, and waits.

Marry Me? (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

> Here's our first prompt for November 2019! Evertonem wanted this single line of dialogue in a spacedogs fic--"Marry me?"
>
> This is likely not what you were expecting at all, but I had a LOT of fun playing around with this one. ;D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They're the first words out of his dumb fuckin' mouth when they meet, and okay yes, he can admit that he's certainly delivered smoother pick-up lines before on past conquests, and alright *maybe* he had been a little bit high at the time too. It was partly due to some drugged out epiphany he can hardly remember now that he suddenly felt the urge to look up at the heavens through one of those giant-ass telescopes they've got out in the mountains and called a pricey as fuck taxi service to drive him out there, having enough sense to realize he probably shouldn't be behind the wheel in his current state at the time. It didn't matter what that epiphany was anymore because he had a much better one once he saw the absolute breathtaking *angel* they assigned to his group as a tour guide, and that epiphany was simply that all the pop singers were right, especially that one smoky-voiced woman he liked to listen to on the radio sometimes—Heaven really was a place on Earth after all.

"Does anyone have any questions so far?" the vision of beauty and splendor had asked after giving them a short presentation with some kind of cool light projection show. They hadn't even gone into the actual observatory to look up at the real night sky yet and Nigel was already feeling starstruck.

His angel had nodded to him in acknowledgment when Nigel lifted up his hand like a goddamn schoolboy. Feeling the weight of those iridescent blue eyes on him, even if they didn't quite look up into his own, Nigel felt more than heard the only two words that had been on his mind since this boy walked into the room leave his own lips in a near breathless rush, "Marry me?"

A couple of people from the group snickered. The high school kids probably, but Nigel didn't bother looking over to check. He wasn't about to look away from the soon-to-be love of his life for anything, not until he got his answer.

His future fiancé appeared startled at first, then frowned in a thoughtful, puzzled sort of way, then blinked, eyes widening as he finally processed the other man's question in a way that made sense to him. "Oh! Um, yes, people do get married out here sometimes, but you'll have to talk with the special events coordinator about that. That's Bryan, he's only here on

weekdays from nine a.m. until six o'clock p.m. Also, you'll have to hire your own officiator and caterer separately. The observatory doesn't provide those services."

"Sweetheart, I'll provide any and everything you want, you just say the word. You want doves? I'll get you doves. Whatever you think we'll need to make the day really special. I mean it, *anything."* There were murmurs from the rest of the crowd now, *rude fucks,* and the snickering kids had progressed to giggling now.

"Please don't bring any live birds to the observatory. Only service animals are permitted here," his betrothed responded blandly. "If there are no more questions, would everyone please follow me?"

They were finally led into one of the big glass-domed rooms with one of the hugest telescopes Nigel had ever seen in his life. They each had to take turns looking through it, and he was impatient for a chance to be closer to his beloved without all the other assholes listening in. When it was finally his turn, Nigel took as long as possible, asking all kinds of questions about the view and the equipment, pretending he was having trouble seeing what his darling was pointing out so he'd have to step in closer again to show him. His love was patient, and Nigel could die happy listening to him ramble on about space all day, but he was still disappointingly professional, as careful not to touch Nigel as he was with all the other guests.

"Gorgeous, I have to confess, I didn't catch your name earlier while you were introducing yourself," he finally admitted after wracking his brain for the past several minutes and still coming up blank. He'd been too busy tumbling headlong into daydreams about wedded domestic bliss already to pay attention at first. Embarrassing, but better that he ask now rather than wait til they were exchanging vows.

"It's Adam. Adam Raki."

"Well, I'm Nigel Ibanescu, gorgeous Adam Raki. We should discuss our last name situation whenever you get off of work. Should one of us take the other's, or just keep our own, or what? I'm not opposed to hyphenation either, though I do think that'll be a bit of a mouthful."

His love—his Adam—didn't have a ready-made answer to spout off this time, now that there could be no more room for misinterpretation. He just stared at the collar of Nigel's shirt for a second before abruptly turning and stepping away to address the whole group again, directing them to the gift shop and reminding them what time the observatory would be closing.

Any hopes that this might be a tactic to put the two of them alone in a room together that much sooner were dashed when Nigel tried to stay behind only to be told, "Sir, please stay with your group. I have other duties I must attend to now. Enjoy your evening."

"Wait, I'm not even with any of these people!" he protested desperately. "I'm only here to see you! Alright, alright, I *was* here to see the stars at first," he added hastily, sober enough by now to realize how that might sound if he didn't clarify in a hurry. *Don't scare him off by sounding like a fucking stalker,* even if that was probably a frighteningly accurate depiction of the kind of man Nigel could be once he had a burning goal on his mind. "But that changed as soon as you walked in the room. I saw you and I knew right away I'd either end up

spending the rest of my life with you or fuckin' die trying." Well fuck, that *'don't be a creep'* ship sure sailed fucking fast, didn't it?

"Mr. Ibanescu, I don't appreciate being made fun of and don't have to tolerate it from you just because you're a visitor. Please leave now."

"I'm not making fun, I swear! Adam, angel, *please—"* Nigel watched helplessly as the younger man simply walked away from him and disappeared behind a door marked *'Employees Only.'* He was sorely tempted to storm after him and better explain himself, but figured it wouldn't help his situation to get himself kicked out, or worse get Adam in trouble with his boss or his coworkers.

He went home dejected that night, a feeling that lasted into the next morning until he came up with a brilliant solution. If it was Nigel's honesty and dedication that Adam called into question and not the fact that he was a fucking weirdo who believed in love at first sight so earnestly he'd make his own intentions clear before introductions were even properly made yet, then he'd simply have to prove himself the best way he knew how. By stalking the shit out of his beloved.

It wasn't hard at all to figure out where he lived, considering Nigel's line of work. The man had a routine that was easy to follow too, he quickly learned. He never just *showed up* wherever Adam was, of course. There were lines that shouldn't be crossed after all. He started out small. A bouquet of roses sent to him at work. Another to his house. Then a call ahead to the store to pay for his weekly restock of groceries the next time he went in. A few more calls later, and the next two months' worth of rent and bills were also paid. He sent more flowers to his home too, some of them with cute little origami stars and doves as part of the arrangements. With every one of them, he made sure the florists included a card with his name and phone number on it, but no matter how extravagant his gifts became, Adam still hadn't called yet.

He was arguing with Darko over Skype about some bullshit to do with the club the day his phone finally rang. He muted the annoying fucker as well as his own mic without a second thought, letting the poor bastard cuss him out with increasingly creative relish in silence and get even more pissed as he realized what Nigel had done.

"You're trying to be what I believe is called a sugar daddy, Nigel," said Adam Raki's virtually monotone voice immediately after greetings were exchanged. The (thankfully as yet *unlit*) cigarette which had been dangling from Nigel's mouth fell out as his jaw dropped an inch or two. He damn near fell over where he was standing.

"That's…I, uh…" It was *true,* but he hadn't realized the beautiful boy of his dreams would just outright *say it like that,* or taken into account what it would do to him to hear that kind of language coming out of his angel's mouth.

"You should know that I do not exchange sexual favors for bribery." He didn't sound offended, just matter of fact, which did not help the way Nigel's knees felt ready to give out even as he hastily spoke up to reassure him.

“No, no, no, I’m not trying to buy your love or anything like that, darling. I just wanted to make sure it was very clear how very fucking serious I am about you. About us. I’m crazy about you, angel.”

“I suppose it would be a rather expensive joke to play on someone for a rather poor punchline.” Adam paused to give a happy-sounding hum. *“That was an unintentional pun. I don’t always notice this quickly when I’ve made one on accident. Do you like coffee?”*

“I—sure, yeah. Yes! I love coffee,” Nigel answered with increasing enthusiasm as his brain caught up and realized the non-sequitur was Adam asking him out *to* coffee.

“I don’t like it that much, but the coffee shop a few blocks from my house makes nice teas as well. Would you like to meet me there today at three p.m.?” It didn’t matter whether Nigel had plans today to talk over business more with Darko or not. There was no way in hell he’d give his angel an answer in anything other than the affirmative.

“Okay, good. We have quite a lot of personal details to go over and boundaries to discuss before I can seriously consider your proposal.” Nigel should probably be feeling a hell of a lot more nervous about having a discussion like that over coffee, but he hasn’t gotten over the fact that at least it wasn’t a definitive *no* and felt too goddamn giddy to be anything other than over the fucking moon about it. Optimistic thinking, some of the self-help books swore by it, and even if that was a load of shit, damned if he wasn’t going to throw every possible strategy he had at making sure this relationship worked out better than his last.

He unmuted the Skype call as soon as Adam had hung up. “Darko, I’ve gotta fuckin’ go, something’s come up.”

“I know that dopey fucking look in your eye. Motherfucker, if you get another divorce and get chased out of another fucking country, I’ll be on the next goddamn plane to personally kick your moronic ass.” Nigel gave him an equally good-natured middle finger salute and hung up.

Business and old friends could wait. He had wedding plans to make.

Chapter End Notes

Heads up, I'm thinking of cleaning up most of the tags for this collection soon and editing individual chapters to just include the relevant "tags" for each story in their beginning notes instead. If you have thoughts on this one way or another, please let me know. I want to make sure I reorganize them in whatever way would be easiest and most comfortable for y'all to navigate as readers.

Jealousy (hannigram au)

Chapter Notes

> Anon asked for hannigram or spacedogs where one party is jealous of the other seemingly showing an interest in/being pursued by someone else.
>
> I decided to approach this from a "What if Jack really did decide he was Done With This Shit and didn't show up in Florence in s3?" angle. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He'd told himself he'd decide what to do once he saw Hannibal. That if it came right to it, he'd go in for the kill at the very first opportunity that opened up, no matter how far from ideal, even in the middle of broad daylight, even in public. He'd deal with the consequences, whatever they were. It's not like it would matter much in the end what happened to Will after he succeeded in cutting Hannibal Lecter out of his life for good. There would be nothing left for him afterwards.

He'd told himself a lot of things. And then he'd seen *her,* lounging on the divan of her and Hannibal's shared Florentine apartment, high as a fucking kite and clearly expecting her bullshit brainwashing story to be believed, or at the very least humored. This woman who showed up at BSHCI to tell Will she believed him for reasons that were, as it turned out, far less altruistic than they initially appeared, then promised to spin gold for Jack Crawford in return for amnesty only to hand them gilded dogshit in the form of more useless, pretentious platitudes and walk out of an interrogation room having literally gotten away with murder. *God,* no wonder Hannibal chose to run away to Europe with her. They were clearly perfect for each other.

Bedelia gazes up at him serenely from her dreamy stupor, not hiding her smugness at having cleverly outsmarted them all once again half as well as she might have sober. She either doesn't notice yet or doesn't care that Will is here alone, no Jack Crawford and no iron bars between them this time. She, like so many others, understands on an abstract level what Will is capable of but doesn't for a moment believe he would ever willingly loosen the iron grip on his self-control long enough to allow his morality to give way to his impulses.

It's an expectation he normally strives to live up to. For Jack, for Alana, for anyone else whose opinion he actually gives a damn about. But Jack isn't here, nor Alana, and his father passed away years ago. So Will gazes back at her, saying nothing, his face as impassive as he can make it despite how badly his lips want to curl up in a snarl, a fact which she knows and secretly delights in.

He gazes back until some form of understanding gradually dawns on her, and the delight abruptly vanishes. Only then does his mouth curl into the shape he's tried for too long to hold

back.

*

He remains at the Uffizi until closing, then exits with what is left of the evening crowd, disappointment sinking heavy and leaden into his belly in replacement of the meals he had skipped while waiting. He had thought—he had *hoped*—that Will would come to him there and had gone to sit before La Primavera the moment he had confirmation that Will had arrived in Florence. Instead, he had sat alone in front of the Botticelli all day, completing one sketch after another without indication that anyone would be joining him any time soon.

The nostalgia of the act had quickly soured for him until eventually the open sketchbook in his lap was no more than a pretense, a way to look busy as he steadily lost faith in his expectations. Once again, he had failed to predict Will Graham, and once again, his own failure weighed acrid and bitter on his tongue.

He did not return to Bedelia that night. Assuming she had not already fled in terror of his possible return anyway, he simply did not have the energy to fend off her usual mental barbs, and might do something unfortunate to anyone unlucky enough to cross his path this evening. Nor, however, could he turn in to the vacant Sogliato residence, as he originally intended once Will met with him first at the Uffizi. He would have been playing a fine, delicate game by sojourning there so soon in the wake of his colleague's disappearance, all but courting a visit from the polizia and Verger-hired henchmen as surely as he had been courting one from Will. It was a risk he was willing to take when he thought Will would be at his side, whether sound of body and mind at the time of discovery or not. Without him, that was another waiting game that lost its novelty. They would have to try harder to find him now.

He rents a hotel room under a different name than Professor Fell's, and does not dare again to dream, fearful of the scent of perfume and ashes, and the burning taste of ortolans and lamb on his tongue that await him there.

The morning brings an unexpected Google alert on his phone, for a phrase he had not expected to see or hear again outside of the late Inspector Pazzi's mouth—*il Mostro.* So soon after the unfortunate detective's disembowelment, it will be even faster now that the Italian police put two and two together and think to check in on the whereabouts of one Hannibal Lecter, and from there make the connection between the man once "falsely" accused by their disgraced officer and the one recently posted on the FBI's Most Wanted List. He cannot bring himself to care about that, too intrigued by the possibilities. Surely it isn't…he shouldn't dare get his hopes up again, he knows better by now. And yet.

He pauses when he comes upon the name of the alleged victim in the first article. Perhaps… well, perhaps Mason Verger had been angry to find Hannibal absent from all his likeliest haunts and had ordered his goons to leave a rather crass message for him. He would not know until he could see for himself what fate had befallen the poor, benighted *Lydia Fell.*

He glosses over the idle speculation online. They of course suspect him, the missing husband Dr. Fell, and are quick to point out how this incident coincides with the sudden absence of his missing colleague. An affair is already rumored. The police have either not yet made the connection between this death and Signor Pazzi's, or they are currently withholding that

information from the media. The latter most likely, though the papers will not be far off in digging up that link for themselves before long.

One of the more unscrupulous tabloids which would be proud to call the likes of Freddie Lounds a peer finally provides the payoff he has been searching for—photographs. And what a vision they finally reveal.

She is much like he had sketched her only yesterday, vine caught in her mouth, an avatar of Psyche frozen in fearful flight from the grasping hands of Amor, only there is no Amor behind her. She is alone, the skin of her palms and fingertips carefully stripped away and every bone in her hands seemingly broken. The message is clear. *She touched that which was not hers to have.*

Hannibal's breath stills in his throat. This is not the indelicate handiwork of one of Mason Verger's men. There is only one individual who could so closely mirror one of his own designs while raising it above the ranks of pale imitation into a unique signature all its own, one that Hannibal could not help but recognize.

He is most intrigued by the conjecture this particular site posits which seems to suggest that Bedelia was not dead at all despite other reports to the contrary when she was found and may yet live, paralyzed as Mason had been by a broken neck. How wickedly cruel if this is true, for he knows how little Bedelia can abide that which she perceives as weakness and she may wish instead that Will had killed her.

Additionally, what could possibly be Will's meaning in leaving her alive to tell the authorities exactly who did this to her, when it could just as easily be passed off as one of his own works with none but himself any the wiser? There can surely be no going back to dear old Uncle Jack after this. His heart beats faster, considering all the possibilities anew.

The last remaining question is where would Will go from here, to lie in wait for Hannibal to come to him, as Hannibal had waited for him at the Uffizi only to have his silent invitation ever so cordially declined? La Primavera is out as the authorities will surely be standing watch there now that "il Mostro" has announced his return so baldly.

There is only one clear option, dangerous though it may be too, as the site of yet one more crime that will eventually be connected to the ones in Florence before long. The window for the two of them to meet again uninterrupted is closing rapidly.

Will has left him a scorned valentine in answer to his broken one, left in the foyer of his mind palace along with a not-quite reunion so close in the making when they had stood only feet apart, Hannibal hidden around the corner from Will in the catacombs, just out of view. After this bold declaration, Will would expect—no, *demand*—that Hannibal step out of the shadows there to meet him now.

Hannibal must hurry if he hopes to make it in time. He has a train back to Palermo to catch.

Chapter End Notes

~~Omg, did I really have to delete everyone's favorite scene from Dolce tho just to torture poor Bedelia and imply a belated Primavera fix-it scene I don't even show instead??~~ The answer is yes, apparently. I don't make the rules, I just follow whatever these assholes tell my brain they're going to do. ¯_(ツ)_/¯

First Time (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

Stonecall asked for Adam being nervous about his first time having sex with Nigel and Nigel being comforting and supportive about it.

I was quite sick while writing this and tbh I'm not wholly thrilled with the final result, but I can't lose my weekly update streak now! So here's a fic that's smut-adjacent while not actually containing any of said smut alluded to because it was the best my cold medicine-addled brain could come up with.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He'd honestly just thought Adam liked taking things slow, and much as he'd love to take things further the moment his darling showed an interest, for now he was content to wait patiently and if things never progressed further than hot and heavy makeouts on the couch, well, he could live with that for as long as it took.

Lately though, Adam seemed to be getting more anxious, more frustrated, and it was difficult not to jump to the worst possible conclusions, like that he might be getting fed up with Nigel's presence in his life. It *probably* wasn't that, he reassured himself, and Adam was much too big on honesty to just leave him hanging indefinitely one way or another without an explanation. As much as it worried him, Nigel understood that he just had to be patient in this too and wait for Adam to find the words he needed to explain whatever was going on in that beautiful brain of his.

Patience was far from one of Nigel's key virtues, but for Adam's sake he could swing it. If it went on for *too* much longer though, he'd need to come up with a delicate way to broach the subject and ask him what's wrong upfront, and delicacy was something he had more trouble with than patience. Best to keep waiting the other man out for now and hope he figured out how to say whatever it was he wanted to tell Nigel soon.

"Nigel, have you had sex with a lot of men?" his darling finally asked one day out of the blue as they were sitting together on Adam's favorite park bench. There was no one else around, not that Nigel would have given a fuck either way. He had nothing to be ashamed about, but he didn't want some asshole strangers listening in on their private conversations either.

"Sure, there have been a few, gorgeous. Women too," he responded easily. "I've been tested since my last romp in the hay with someone else before I met you though, all clear," he added in case that's what Adam had been so hesitant to bring up.

"That's good to know. Thank you for telling me." He could still sense a bit of tension around the younger man and suspected that wasn't what had been on Adam's mind after all. "I have

no experience with other men. My only reference point is what I've seen in pornography." Adam looked to him now with an expression Nigel could only call nervous. *Oh.* So that's what this had been about. Nigel should have guessed.

"Darling, I don't care if you've fucked zero men or a hundred. You know I'm crazy about you no matter what, don't you?"

"But what if I'm bad at it? What if I get overwhelmed and we have to stop and you get sexually frustrated because I'm not good enough? *I'm* sexually frustrated and we haven't done anything yet."

"Adam, listen to me." Nigel turned more fully towards him, pulling him closer. "Nothing you do or don't do, as the case may be, is going to send me running, alright? If we start something and you wanna stop, we'll stop, no questions asked. I'll try not to let you get overwhelmed in the first place if I can help it. We'll go slow. And there is no way in hell I'm going to think you're 'bad' at anything, so put that miserable thought right out of your head. So what if you're not experienced yet? That just means I get to be the one who shows you new things you've never felt before," he finished with a bit of a lecherous grin.

Adam sat silently for a moment, absorbing all that Nigel had said and thinking about it. Then he stood up and said, "We should go back to my apartment. I'd like to have sex with you now." *God bless Adam fucking Raki.* Nigel didn't know how he got half so lucky to wind up with an angel like this, but he'd make damn sure to fulfill every word of his promise and then some so he'd get to keep him.

Chapter End Notes

I've learned from this exercise that I don't handle secondhand embarrassment very well whether I'm healthy or feverish from a cold, so that's probably another reason I struggled with this one, not gonna lie. It's not a headspace I want to linger in so the urge to downplay and rush past that kind of awkwardness is way too high for me. xD

Definitely Not a Meet-Cute (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

> Posting a little later this week because of the holiday, but it also happens to be the longest thing I've written this month and actually fills *two* prompts--Radiumkind's request that Nigel be into some kind of reality or talk show that he's embarrassed about, and K's prompt for Adam to be the one who enthusiastically pursues Nigel when they meet instead of the other way around. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There's something about that Lipton guy's voice that's just so soothing. Darko gave him a ton of shit about it when he found out that Nigel's favorite program was some stuffy interview series with prissy Hollywood stars, but that wasn't the point of it. Nigel wouldn't consider himself all that into movies any more than the average person. All he'd say in his own defense was that the show was helpful for improving his English, and that was technically true in the beginning, but after a while it just became *the thing he'd do* whenever he had more than five minutes to sit down and relax, usually while stuffing his face with a frozen burrito or some greasy fast food shit before he got back to hitting the streets.

Maybe it isn't James Lipton's voice or anything to do with the content of the show itself after all. Maybe what Nigel likes about it now, since he's seen every episode with Lipton still hosting enough times at this point to almost have the damn things memorized, is the illusion of mundanity and routine it injects into the usual chaos of his hectic fucking life. Whatever the reason, Darko isn't around to give him shit anymore since he moved to NYC, leaving him free to watch the illegally downloaded copies on his phone while he takes the subway any fucking time he wants without repercussion.

"Oh, that's a really good episode. It's one of my favorites actually." Nigel blinks at the voice coming from so near and slightly above him. He looks up, at eye level first with a stranger's crotch a foot away from his face in neatly pressed slacks, a common enough occurrence in New York subways in the middle of the day that he'd gotten used to keeping his eye on his phone in his own lap, since he'd learned Americans could be real fucking uptight about catching someone "staring" at their junk as if there were a ton of other fucking options available.

His gaze finally migrates up further to find the face of a *very* attractive man who isn't even looking back, his own eyes still fixed on the phone in Nigel's lap. He might have felt inclined under other circumstances on calling the man out for being a nosy little shit, if he wasn't so fucking fascinated. He seems not only interested in a show Nigel was sure nobody else watched anymore, but *way* into it. Nigel can only stare up in amazement as the man watches it upside down and without sound, Lipton's voice still coming in through the one earbud in Nigel's head while the other dangles freely. (He's always losing those damned cordless ones

Darko got him for Christmas one year, so he doesn't even bother with them outside of the house anymore, lest he misplace them more permanently.) Hell, not only is this guy watching, but mouthing along with every word being spoken just under his breath! Nigel hears him get every word exactly right, even down to the same inflections and emphasis given on certain syllables by whoever's speaking.

Nigel waits until there is a brief lull in the interview, a pause between the actress whose name he forgot wrapping up her response before Lipton makes his next observation to ask, "Can you do that for every episode or just your favorites?"

It's actually kind of cute how the guy blinks at him. Nigel can actually see on his face in real time the journey his mind has to make from whatever headspace he fell into just now to come back into this reality. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to become a distraction. I also shouldn't have been looking at your phone in the first place. Please return to enjoying the episode." His new little friend studiously looks away to try to give him space since the car is too crowded for him to actually go anywhere. Nigel can't help but notice now that without the show serving as a decent distraction for him anymore, the stranger appears somewhat uncomfortable standing there, trying not to visibly cringe at every inevitable accidental brush against him by the other standing passengers. He also realizes for the first time that he's taking up more space himself on the bench than he really needs, "manspreading" a bit as younger Americans say these days.

"How about you sit and keep watching it with me?" he suggests, making room. *'See, Darko?'* he wants to say to the fucker over Skype later. *'I can too meet new fucking people and make friends without cracking any skulls or trying to get into somebody's pants.'* Admittedly he certainly wouldn't mind getting this hot stranger horizontal sometime, but he's trying not to push his luck for once and thinks it could maybe be a good thing for him to give a damn about someone else in a strictly platonic way who isn't thousands of miles and a fucking ocean away. Emotional growth or some shit like that, his therapist would probably say if he had one.

"Oh. Are you sure?" The man squeezes into the seat beside him, leaning in such a way that he doesn't accidentally brush against the woman a little further down the bench but has to be practically pressed up against Nigel at thigh and shoulder in order to fit. Surprising that it doesn't seem to bother the guy, but Nigel certainly can't say that he minds. *No, stop that,* he reminds his brain and libido to behave. *Platonic, remember?* Just two dudes sitting on a subway car, watching Inside the Actors Studio together, no big deal. Not everything has to be some kind of romantic fucking meet-cute. The last time he conflated his connection with someone else into something out of a Cary Grant movie, it hadn't ended so well. He'd better chill the fuck out before he scares his new friend off.

"Name's Nigel by the way," he says as he passes the dangling earbud over to his companion. The man's hesitance to accept it compels him to add, "I never use it so it's clean, I swear." That's not a hundred percent true all the time, but it's not like Nigel's got an ear infection or head lice or anything, so if the guy's a bit fussy because of shit like that he's got nothing to worry about anyway.

“I’m Adam,” the man says after a moment, still looking at the earbud in his hand without putting it in yet. “Normally, I only watch Inside the Actors Studio on my laptop in the evenings when I’m sitting down to dinner.”

“Really?” Nigel asks, surprising himself some more by thinking of what a dream it would be to come home to someone who just wants to unwind in front of the TV over a nice meal with him when he gets back from a long day of dealing with others’ bullshit instead of constantly expecting to go out all the time or launching into conversation while he’s just trying to eat, like all the other high maintenance people he’s dated before. Fuck, he’s really having trouble remembering why he told himself he’s *not* trying to fall into bed with this one. Something about not scaring him off, right, or protecting himself from his own lofty romantic expectations. Or proving to himself that Darko was wrong about him being incapable of just being nice and enjoying the company of a pretty face without falling in love again for once. Yeah, one of those reasons.

“You know, I haven’t made too many friends yet since I moved to this country,” he admits. Because shared interests and allowing yourself some vulnerability, those are supposed to be key to opening yourself up to new relationships, right? Even platonic ones. Who knows, maybe under this Adam’s soft and sweet exterior is another soul who can tell him what he needs to hear sometimes and call him out on his bullshit like Dark can, only while being less of an ass about it. Uh, not that he really needs to be piling extra expectations like that on the poor cute bastard either just because he’s trying not to let on to himself or the other how much he’d like to offer up his lap as an alternative seating arrangement if the bench is too uncomfortable for that gorgeous ass he’d only gotten a split second to admire earlier as Adam turned around. *Holy shit-balling Christ, is he bad at this.*

Adam pops his borrowed earbud back out and just stares at Nigel’s shoulder for a second, making him worry he’s about to get chewed out for inviting the man to watch the show with him only to interrupt it five seconds later. That would piss Nigel off too. He would wonder why he’s letting whatever this guy thinks get to him so much, except he already knows it’s because he desperately wants Adam to like him even if he’s still trying to convince himself that desire is in no way linked to how much he’s been secretly fantasizing about slobbering all over the man’s dick.

“I don’t have a lot of friends either,” Adam says finally, the tiny frown on his face clearing up. Nigel realizes then with relief that he hadn’t been too annoyed after all and just needed a minute like before to pull his attention back in order to parse what Nigel just said. “Just Harlan. My new neighbor seems nice too, but I’ve only spoken to her once, when she asked to borrow my laundry card. I wouldn’t say we’re friends yet. We can be friends if you like, Nigel.”

“I think I’d like that very much, darl—*uh,* Adam,” he coughs, cursing his slip of the tongue. He pretends for a second to be distracted with pulling his own earbud out and pausing the video on his phone, embarrassed and hoping that Adam didn’t notice.

“Nigel, are you attracted to me?” Nigel sputters, mind screeching to a halt as he struggles to find the words in English that could possibly salvage this situation. “I only ask because I’m very attracted to you. That’s the reason I was looking at you before I realized what you were

watching. I hope this doesn't negatively impact our friendship if you aren't also sexually interested in me, as I would still very much like to be friends in either case, but I would like a romantic involvement more if you would be interested. It's difficult to meet someone who shares at least one of my interests and doesn't seem to mind that I've already made a few social mistakes during our first interaction, and it's especially rare to find those qualities in someone I'd also like to sleep with."

Throughout this little speech, Adam's voice stays mostly monotone as it has every time he's spoken except when he was mimicking the people on the show (and Nigel's gonna have to remember to ask about that some more later, but he has a sneaking suspicion now that he's not the only one who first got into the show as some form of speech practice), only as he went on his voice had gotten faster and a touch more animated, and now that he's done he holds himself very still in that way Nigel knows people do when they're trying very hard not to fidget.

"It's a pretty terrifying fucking thing, laying all your cards out on the table like that, isn't it?" Adam gives only a brief jerky nod, still waiting on an answer. "Well, you're braver than I am for it, darling. Here I was prepared to torture myself with pining just so I could keep sitting next to you."

Adam frowns again slightly. "Well, that's silly. I'd certainly let you do a lot more than just sit by me."

He's leaning further into Adam's space before he realizes that isn't necessarily an invitation to start *now* and forces himself to stop just in time, with only about an inch of shared breath left between their faces. Luckily for him, Adam is able to interpret *that* for the invitation it absolutely fucking is and meets him the rest of the way.

It isn't just a light, shy peck either. He kisses Nigel like he really fucking means it more than he's ever meant anything else in his life, which is probably a whole hell of a lot if any of his suspicions about the type of man Adam is are right. He kisses Nigel like he wants to crawl into his lap exactly the way Nigel had just been fantasizing about and is only stopping himself because they're still on a crowded subway car and probably causing enough awkward, uncomfortable glances away from where they're sitting as it is. If Nigel had two coherent brain cells left to rub together, he'd likely be using them to thank the Lord that Darko isn't here to laugh his ass off and say, *'I fucking told you so, jackass.'*

Because he ain't thinking about anything else at all, not Darko, not the other passengers, not the phone sitting silent in his lap, not even the stop he likely already missed several minutes ago while he was busy trying not to think of doing exactly this, he just curls his hand around the back of Adam's neck when the younger man starts to pull away and kisses him back some more like he really fucking means it too.

Chapter End Notes

God, even when I *specifically* set out to have Nigel exercise some self-restraint instead of pursuing a romance with Adam for once, he still has a hard time finding any goddamn chill about the boy. xD

First Impressions (hannigram soulmate words au)

Chapter Notes

This fic is a self-prompt based on a fun tumblr post I read. To summarize, it's your typical your-soulmate's-first-words-to-you-are-tattooed-on-your-arm trope, but with the added caveat that in a universe where such a phenomenon exists, NO ONE would use standard greetings such as "Hello" or "Nice to meet you" when meeting someone new and everyone would instead introduce themselves with a greeting unique to them in order to avoid confusion.

Much longer alternative title to this fic would be: "The One Where Will and Hannibal Troll Each Other Hard Only Seconds After Meeting" or "Yes, Boys, The Universe is Definitely Laughing AT You, Not With You" ;D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Dr. Lecter, this is Will Graham. Will, Dr. Hannibal Lecter. He’ll be joining us on this investigation for the foreseeable future.” Introductions now made on their behalf in Jack’s usual quick and efficient but good-natured manner, the BSU team leader now politely steps back and turns his focus away to something on his desk to allow the other two gentlemen a moment of space to make their own introductions properly, as is custom.

As usual, Hannibal allows his new acquaintance the chance to speak first. Whatever they have to say always tells him so much more about the person introducing themselves than they likely realize, revealing clues about their own values and what they consider most important in the act of putting their best foot forward for a potential soulmate, an advantage that would be lost were he to speak first, filling them with the inevitable—if quickly recovered from—rush of disappointment as they realize they have still not met “the one.” This way, he always encounters the best of both worlds, their cresting hope swiftly followed by crumpled dreams before the interaction is then allowed to move forward without the burden of uncertain and unrealistic expectations.

Will Graham barely looks at him and projects no aura of anticipation as he mutters with casual disregard a set of words which are normally only spoken by those confidently assured they have already met their soulmate, which Jack has already assured him is not the case with Graham, or when speaking only to previously known acquaintances, which is most certainly not the case either. This simple blasé phrase is one none too intimate as one would use to greet friends, yet nonetheless still far too familiar, as when bumping into an oft-greeted coworker. “Hi there, how are you?”

Crawford gives the teacher-turned-profiler a dry and mildly reproving look, clearly used to this odd behavior from his subordinate. Hannibal keeps his own expressions carefully neutral

and still to hide how intently fascinated, and shaken, he actually is. One of his longest standing presumptions has just been irrevocably shattered.

Two possibilities are immediately clear. Either the words tattooed on Will Graham's skin are so utterly bland and uninteresting that he feels compelled to greet new people in kind in hopes of eliciting them, or they are so remarkable, and perhaps in some manner alarming to him, that he would instead pose a question specifically primed to invoke only the most boring and unoriginal of answers in order to deliberately avoid hearing them.

Looking closely, Hannibal can see the barest trace of petty smugness on Graham's face at having either led yet another fool into answering him without first imparting their own unique special greeting, or at the very least stunned them into temporary silence and outrage with his rude, shocking disregard for social norms. He has even turned slightly away already, quietly dismissive of whatever response Hannibal could possibly give and far more interested in the secrets his cup of acrid breakroom coffee might have to share with him instead.

"I'm the Chesapeake Ripper."

Crawford's expression clouds over in confusion and the mildest hint of alarm for only a moment before transforming into one of reluctant amusement. "Ah, interesting choice there, doctor, if a bit in poor taste. I hope I'm right in assuming that's not your *usual* first greeting?"

"My apologies, Jack. They were the first to come to mind, I suppose in part because of where we are and whose company I'm in, though it's also for that very reason I perhaps should have rethought them," Hannibal replies, not the least bit sorry at all. His gaze has not left Graham, who looks up at neither of them, now perfectly still, his cup of coffee still poised midair halfway to his lips. "I will freely admit, I was somewhat offended by Mr. Graham's choice of first greeting and meant only to retaliate a little by parrying with something shocking in return. It was inconsiderate of me."

"Well, you certainly achieved that goal, I'd say. Got us both pretty good for a minute. Isn't that right, Will?" Jack falls silent in his attempt to play off his own brief discomfort and smooth things over once he realizes his star profiler has not recovered from his own surprise nearly half so well. "Will?" he tries again, now with a note of subtle concern.

"I must also confess—" As Hannibal starts to say more, Jack returns his focus to him once again. Will continues to stare down his coffee. "When I was younger, I used to wonder if the universe's grand design was little more than a cosmic joke, or if it was possible for God to make errors. It seemed unimaginable to me then that fate and circumstance would conspire to inextricably bind me to another through such a boring and uninspired question." This finally achieves the desired result as Will Graham makes eye contact with him for the first time, shadowed seastorm eyes now holding his own with lightning-quick scorn.

"You thought the universe was pranking *you?"* Self-righteousness is achingly lovely on Will Graham. It seems Hannibal should have held more faith in the powers that be; he feels foolish now for assuming because of five little words that his soulmate could ever possibly be boring. "My options were boiled down to either a serial killer or a goddamn troll making it their personal mission to piss me off within seconds of meeting me." His lips form into a thin,

repressed line as he stands there. “I *used* to think I knew which one would feel worse when it finally happened.”

Crawford looks between them both somewhat aghast as it becomes apparent to him as well what has just happened between them.

“Needless to say, Jack, I don’t think Dr. Lecter and I will be working together after all,” Will continues, voice dripping with cutting irony despite the fact that he is speaking now to a supervisor. “I hope you have a very productive meeting. I’ll be returning to my classroom now,” he adds with a note of certain finality. *Ah.* Another unexpected little turn in their story.

Jack has the look of a man very much inclined to argue against his best profiler storming out to go back to teaching, but at a loss for how best to persuade him in that moment to stay. He can hardly admit now that he had brought Lecter on specifically to study the man who would turn out to be his soulmate, nor would it be ethical to insist that two individuals with such a deeply personal connection—albeit a new and rather tenuous one at that—work together in a professional setting.

Will Graham does not look at Hannibal again as he walks out of the office. While Hannibal is no longer disappointed in the universe’s choice of equal for him, it would seem that Graham has found *him* wanting instead. There is none of the giddy joy on his face in finding “the one” that even Hannibal can admit he feels now to some extent, nor the relief one might expect upon *supposedly* learning his soulmate is not, in fact, the Ripper as stated after all. Could that possibly be another underlying reason behind Will’s disappointment, and if so how aware of it is he himself? While Jack clearly still can’t wrap his mind around how a surly individual like Will Graham and the mannerly good doctor before him could possibly be soulmates, Hannibal suspects them to be far more alike in the ways that actually matter than Crawford or even Will himself may yet realize.

Overall, Hannibal is unruffled by the poor first impression he has made. He has gotten what he wanted and more in poking Will Graham and winding him up, but there is more at stake now than just his own entertainment. He never thought he would be glad to meet his soulmate, had always suspected it would be a rather anticlimactic affair, yet here he is now trying to think of ways to make up for their abrupt first meeting and gradually win the other man over. It should make for an interesting game.

“I’m so sorry, Dr. Lecter,” Jack apologizes on his colleague’s behalf, sympathetic to the perceived plight of being walked out on by your own soulmate within minutes of getting introduced. “Will can be pretty abrasive at times, as you just found out. Give him some time to cool off and, ah, maybe don’t prod him so openly like that in future?” Oh, but where would the fun in that be?

“Perhaps you’re right. In the meantime, while Will won’t be joining us after all, perhaps I could still offer you my insights on this cannibal you are hunting in Minnesota?” He will still need a reason to keep coming back to Quantico where he can continue to poke and prod at Will Graham some more after all.

Perhaps he can get Will’s class schedule from Jack or Alana and bring breakfast enough for two tomorrow. He hopes Will likes sausage.

Chapter End Notes

To recap what you literally just read:
Will: Dammit, I always knew I'd either wind up with the actual fucking Ripper or some asshole trying to rile me up for a laugh as my soulmate!
Hannibal: Why not both?

Yep, it was another soulmate AU where they still meet in Jack's office, because why fix what ain't broke?

I skipped posting last week because work ended up keeping me super busy, and just as a heads up I may skip the week of Christmas as well since we'll be traveling to visit family during that time. I still intend to post more of the prompts left on my list otherwise this month.

Also, just in case you missed the summary update, **prompts are now closed for December, to be opened again sometime later in 2020.** Thank you to everyone who read, commented, and/or participated! I'll let you know when I start accepting new ones again next year! <3

Puppy, part 2 (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

> Another prompt by Evertonem, who requested a sequel to my puppy-verse fic (chapter 2 of this anthology). It's another pretty dang short one because prepping at work and at home for the holiday break has kept me busy. Also, because my computer needed a reset and therefore doesn't have my preferred Office suite installed at the moment, so I had to type it up elsewhere. I should have it reinstalled after this week so that won't have an effect on anything else I post.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She's barely stepped two feet outside her door before nearly being pushed back against it by a solid mass of warmth, slobber, and fur. "Oh! Oh, hi there, hiya!" Beth greets her new fuzzy friend, voice raising a few octaves higher in pitch than normal.

"Cassiopeia, down," the dog's owner orders. "I'm very sorry, ma'am," he tells Beth without quite meeting her eyes, probably embarrassed. "Cass gets excited easily and jumping on people is the one thing that's been exceedingly difficult to train her out of."

"Oh, she's just fine. Aren't ya, good girl?" Beth says, petting her vigorously to the fluffy mutt's infinite delight.

"Please don't pet her after she just jumped on you. It reinforces bad behavior."

"Right, sorry." The dog's delight is replaced by a look of profound tragic suffering which Beth meets in kind as she removes her hands. "Sorry, puppy," she repeats in a singsong voice.

Cass responds to this by jumping up to place her front paws on Beth once more until the man orders her down again. "Baby talk is unfortunately a trigger for her to keep doing that as well. She takes it as encouragement."

"I see that." Beth takes a moment to observe her new neighbor who still won't look directly at her and instead appears to be focusing most of his attention on the dog. "I'm Beth, by the way. I just moved in here," she says, extending her hand for the man to take.

He hesitates before moving the leash to his other hand and grasping hers in a fairly weak handshake that ends rather quickly. "I'm Adam. I live in that apartment there—" he turns slightly to point at a nearby door, "—with Cass and Nigel."

"Is Nigel another cute doggo?"

Adam huffs a quiet laugh, gaze still on the floor between them, but doesn't answer until another second or two of expectant silence passes. "Oh, you weren't making a joke. No,

Nigel isn’t a dog. He’s my boyfriend.”

“Ah, of course.” She feels a brief twinge of disappointment upon learning the handsome neighbor with the adorable pup isn’t available, but it quickly passes as they part ways—Beth heading out to the store as she intended while Adam and Cass return to their apartment, presumably just returning from a walk. It would be good for her to make some new friends here and maybe even wrangle herself a fun role as occasional dogsitter, if Adam and Nigel are interested. She thinks Adam seems a bit odd but in a really sweet way and wonders if his partner shares a similar shy disposition.

She smiles to herself as she browses the aisles and decides that, even though it’s traditionally the other way around when someone moves in, she’ll pick up a nice fruit basket on the way out to surprise the lovely couple next door with and ask how they feel about going to an off-Broadway show with her and a few of her teacher friends next week.

Chapter End Notes

A story in which I'm actually nice to Beth for once! :0 Because I'd like to think maybe she'd make a better friend without all those romantic expectations thrown into the mix as well. She's still her, so still not perfect (because who is?) but I might be a little more forgiving of her flaws in a universe where she doesn't break my poor Adam's heart.

This, Our Infinity (Chapter 2 Sneak Preview)

Chapter Summary

A flashback scene from the next chapter of my Hannibal/Marvel crossover.

Chapter Notes

It looks like I'm not gonna be finished in time with this year's prompt for International Fanworks Day (what else is new?), so instead here's my contribution for Evil Author Day--the opening scene for the second chapter of my Infinity War/Endgame AU This, Our Infinity (which is also taking me forever to work on because, again, what else is new?)

Spoilers ahead for the aforementioned MCU films, obviously. :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"He's gone, Jack." For a moment he almost believed it too, that just maybe Hannibal had taken him at his word and chosen to bow out of Will's life gracefully, fled to make his way back to Europe where Will would not follow this time, keeping his own word no matter what in deference to the fact that Hannibal had chosen to respect it.

"I'm here." Will's stomach flipped for reasons that were easy to identify. Victory that his little gambit had worked and Hannibal would get his promised reckoning—even better, would bring it upon himself out of pride and refusal to accept Will's rejection a second time. Frustration that he had been proven right and his desire to be left alone in peace had been ignored, found wanting and irrelevant under the weight of Hannibal's regard for him. Churning sickness because part of him still didn't want to see the man caged, despite everything. And the sharp, pleased thrill that always came with hearing the man's voice again after languishing too long without, whether that be for months or for hours.

None of this showed on his face where Hannibal could see it, else it would be like he had won after all. No reason to give the man more to be smug about, whether it be to revel in Will's manipulation or in the fact that he would be missed despite Will's claim otherwise, not when he still looked as goddamn pleased with himself as ever even as he was forced to his knees and made to put his hands above his head.

Will liked to think it wasn't Hannibal he would miss, really, only the lost opportunity for friendship he'd once thought they shared before he knew everything, and still mourned. It was a palatable version of the truth that helped him keep his grip on what bit of sanity and

solitude he had left. He'd almost made the mistake once of convincing himself he could look past what Hannibal was and what he had done, and look at what it had cost them all.

"You've caught the Chesapeake Ripper, Jack." Judging from Crawford's tired smirk, Will wasn't the only one weary of Hannibal's self-satisfied attitude, though there was an edge of cautious triumph to it as well. Even if it wasn't quite the hard-won arrest he'd wanted, the end result would be the same—Lecter in chains and secured somewhere his mind could be prodded and studied in relative safety.

"I didn't catch you. You turned yourself in."

"I want you to know exactly where I am," Hannibal replied, eyes cutting back to Will standing alone on his front porch. One of the uniformed officers muttered something Will didn't catch, not that it mattered anyway. "And where you can always find me."

He thought, at first, that it was his imagination as always. A vivid story painted in symbolism of the slow erosion of Hannibal's presence from his life from this moment forward, gently flaking away like the sands of time. It was the only way what he was seeing made sense, and he really believed that to be all it was until Jack brusquely asked, "What's happening?" and the officers suddenly started to talk over each other, their voices panicked, though most seemed not to be paying Hannibal or the FBI agent any mind and were focused instead on two of their comrades, unintentionally blocking them from Will's frame of view.

Hannibal pulled his hands away from his head to stare intently at one of them, observing with slow-blinking curiosity as it steadily disintegrated into particles of floating ash, then the rest of his arm along with it.

Will's heart thudded. Now he was moving a step forward. Two. From just a bit closer, he could see hairline cracks spreading across the rest of Hannibal's skin like the surface of a frozen lake.

His throat closed on a scream that would never stop coming if he dared let it loose and instead croaked out a name he'd only uttered once in the other man's presence before, in the darkened catacombs where he'd whispered his forgiveness. He thought Hannibal's eyes might have met his again before they too were gone. It didn't matter how quickly he'd flown down the steps of his porch in those brief seconds. There was nothing left but an old nightmare suddenly made all too real, a shadow suspended on a cloud of dust rapidly drifting away by the time Will got to the patch of earth where Hannibal had once been.

He fell to his knees, fingers scrabbling into the hard earth as if to anchor himself to the spot. This was all that remained. Already impossible to tell where the dirt ended and Hannibal began when most of him had scattered to the wind. Maybe some of him clung invisibly now, gritty and grey, to Will's clothes, his face, his beard. Maybe Hannibal was in his lungs and that was why it felt like he was choking.

There were wails of rage, distress, and terror all around him, as if for once the universe were aligning itself with the core of Will Graham as its center mass and echoing back what it heard from within him, instead of trying to stretch him out to its farthest edges in long membranous cords, too taut to allow him to float in his own pain for fear of drowning in others'. It took

him longer than it perhaps should have to realize what it actually meant, that the sounds were indeed human and coming from some of the officers. The two men they'd been huddled around were also gone.

The knowledge of this held a quality of unreality all its own. It seemed impossible to Will that any force with the power to smite Hannibal Lecter from existence would waste its efforts on erasing others from it as well, as if the man were only one more casualty in some widespread and otherwise mundane tragedy. Yet the frantic messages now coming in one after another on the police radios seemed to suggest this was exactly the case, however unlikely it ought to be.

Some of the officers who had stood closest to the center of this phenomenon looked as if they'd been lightly kissed by the aftereffects of a freak sandstorm, and were horrorstruck as one would expect them to be after getting spattered in a dying friend's blood. It didn't cling so invisibly after all then. Whereas Crawford had instinctively stepped back and avoided most of the spray, Will had dived straight into the vortex of floating ash at his feet.

If the officers were lightly kissed by what was left of their friends, Will was thickly coated in Hannibal, dry and shifting and just starting to itch at his scalp and his shoulders where some had slid down the back of Will's collar. His face was tacky and sticky from involuntary crying, mud streaking down his cheeks into his beard like running mascara. What they didn't scrape off him into an evidence bag for testing would take days to wash out of his pores. There was a joke to be made here about how this was the most direct contact Hannibal had made with his skin since bathing him, and Will managed to give a single hoarse, rasping giggle followed by an equally pathetic, rusty cough.

He gasped for breath and held out his hands in front of him, palms upward, and stared at the thinly smeared dirt on his fingertips. Only when he'd had his fill of looking and swiping his thumbs in whorling patterns over the powdery detritus that coated them did he finally look up at Jack, who had gone unusually quiet since Will ran over and dropped to the ground in front of him. His old friend and former boss was looking right back, gazing down at the younger man now kneeling before him in Lecter's place.

He stood silent and steady as bedrock, but something in his expression appeared more rattled than it had when his quarry had crumbled into literal dust before his eyes. He stared down at the broken man at his feet as if he had never truly seen Will Graham before and was realizing it for the first time.

There was nothing left of Will to care about what that meant for them. There was little left of Will to care about much at all. He might as well be the one who crumbled and drifted apart. Hannibal Lecter was the only real thing in his world. Without him, without even the promise of him locked away in prison where the empath could pretend out of sight also meant out of mind, Will Graham was a ghost.

Chapter End Notes

If not tomorrow (ahahahahaHA, can you imagine??) then sometime later this week I should have the prompt I'm working on for Fanworks Day ready to upload as well. Still not taking on new prompts though in general just yet, sorry. I'll definitely update y'all when that changes! ^_^

Birdbrain (spacedogs)

Chapter Notes

The long-awaited sequel to "Marry Me?" (chapter 15) as requested by radiumkind.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shit, shit, shit, he's a dead man. *He's a dead man.* Forget ruining the rehearsal, forget the wedding, if one of those birdbrains shits on the expensive ass equipment in here, his love will go to the fucking cops and get a restraining order like he should have done two and a half months ago, and dammit he does not need to start piling on a criminal record here too by stalking his beloved again, that shit *does not look good* to the immigration office. No fucking senses of humor in this country, the pricks.

After a solid twenty minutes of spreading bird seed and crushed up crackers on the floor and making an ass of himself trying to mimic bird noises to lure the little bastards down from the rafters back to him, he finally manages to grab them both and zip them up tight in his leather jacket, ignoring the flapping and angry squawks as he starts to make his way confidently out of the observatory again.

"Nigel, why do you have two pigeons in your jacket?" Well, *shit.*

*

This is the best fucking idea he's ever had in his whole miserable existence, he's sure of it. *No birds at the observatory,* his Adam says. Well. His darling is clearly biased because of *one* asshole parrot ruining the whole experience for him. Birds are great! Romantic as hell and smart too, and Nigel can prove it if he just gets these gullible doves chilling at the park a short walk away from his husband-to-be's home eating out of the palm of his hands.

The shrooms he ate earlier led him here, making everything all bright and shimmery and guiding him right to his new little avian friends. That's how he *knows* it's a brilliant idea. The trees keep telling him so, their voices whispering to him in the wind, and trees are never wrong. That's just *facts*. Everyone knows that. And he'll show that stinking parrot not to keep messing with his beloved anymore too.

*

"Nigel, this is Gregory. Gregory, uh…meet Nigel?" The cockatoo Adam's boss apparently brings into work with her every day puffs up his feathered little chest and gives Nigel a look that says, *'Just try something, motherfucker.'* He can respect something that small and brave trying to size him up. Hell, he can even respect how smitten the dumb featherbrain is with his beloved because honestly *who wouldn't be,* but he is not one to back away from a challenge. Never has been.

He gives the little shit a curt nod. He'll show Gregory who's the real cock of the walk around here.

*

"Where is that bastard? Point me to which office is his."

Adam points obligingly, half-jogging now to keep up with Nigel's furious stride. "Nigel, please don't cause a scene. I like my job here."

"I know, baby, but I can't just stand idly by knowing some asshole is gonna keep groping you every chance he gets."

"Gregory does not *grope* me—"

"You said he was slipping notes in your back pocket. In your *back pocket,* hon. If that's not an excuse to squeeze your cute ass, I'm Mother fuckin' Theresa."

"He doesn't squeeze. Um. *Huh*. Come to think of it, I'm not sure you understand. Did I forget to tell you Gregory is—"

"And what about that time you said he *nibbled on your ear?* I mean, ex-fucking-*scuse* me, but how do you interpret that, darling? And how the shit did you expect me to react when you told me?"

"Well, it's how he shows affection…"

"Exactly. Now Gregory and I are gonna have a little *chat* about professionalism in the workplace." He opens the door labeled with Gregory's nameplate on it without knocking first. He blinks, wondering if he just missed the bastard. There's no one here but some fucking parrot napping on its perch.

*

"I know you said you didn't want to see a tailor, darling, and I don't blame you. It's not a whole lot of fun just standing there and letting them prick you with needles and shit. If there's anything that doesn't fit right, just tell me and I'll take it back and get them to adjust it some more."

"It's a perfect fit, Nigel. Thank you." His beloved turns to look at himself in the mirror some more, making sure every line and seam of the tux really is as perfect as he claims before he shuts himself back into his closet to change. "Nigel really does have a great eye for this sort of thing, Harlan," he says when he returns to the bedroom where both men sit on the little divan at the edge of his bed to wait for him. "I don't know how he does it without checking my sizes first. It's like he just *knew* them already when he started buying me new clothes, the first week we started going out."

Harlan doesn't say anything. He just clenches his jaw and side eyes the Romanian warily. Nigel gives the older man his most charming, innocent smile.

*

“And then Gregory was just being really loud and obnoxious throughout the whole office party, so—”

“I’m sorry, let’s back up a minute, Adam,” he hears the man named Harlan interrupt. Nigel frowns, both at the rudeness and at him interrupting another story about this Gregory he still has yet to acquaint with the business end of his Beretta, though it’s only a matter of time based on some of what he’s heard about the guy already. He pauses in the act of making everybody’s drinks so he can hear better from his stance in the kitchen without the clink of ice against glass distracting him.

“What was that you said earlier about this Nigel fellow?” Harlan asks in a hush, trying to keep his voice down. “Did you say that he *pays you* to go on dates and to, uhm, *cuddle* afterwards when he brings you home?” Nigel does not appreciate the insinuation of that either. They really *have* only cuddled so far. He’s trying to be a gentleman here and wait until they’ve tied the knot to make a move. It’s not like either of them are virgins, sure, but it’s the principle of the thing. He wants to do *this* marriage right.

“He does,” Adam says without modulating his own volume a bit, bless him. “Only until the wedding though. After that, there won’t be much point since we’ll be sharing assets anyway from then on.”

“Until the *what now?”* Harlan’s voice is significantly louder this time.

“The wedding. Oh, you’re invited by the way. It’s next week. Nigel wanted to get married right away when we started dating but I told him we should wait since I knew you were coming to visit in another month.”

The sounds issuing from Harlan’s mouth now are those of a man struggling to find words after he’s been rendered speechless. Nigel smirks and puts the last finishing touches on their drinks, carrying them all on a tray back to the living room without bothering to hide the smug twist of his lips.

*

“I just, uh, *thank you,* thank you again, for meeting up with me here.” Goddammit, he didn’t stutter and make this much of a damn fool of himself when he was courting Gabi. Why does he have to be such a gibbering idiot now? He warms his hands around the cup of coffee and takes another drink to keep himself from saying anything else just as moronic.

“I brought a list of questions,” Adam says, business-like, sure enough bringing out a sheet of paper and carefully unfolding it to spread out on the table between them. Rows of bullet points down the list, typed. “Do you have any family to speak of?”

“Nope,” Nigel answers, relaxing a bit. If Adam’s taking this “getting to know each other” bit this seriously, it’s a good sign, and the structured format of his approach is surprisingly helpful at easing his nerves and taking some of the pressure off.

“Me neither. My father passed away two years ago.” Adam is moving on to the next question faster than Nigel can get his condolences out. “You already know where I work. What about your job? What do you do for a living?”

“I run a nightclub.” A beat of silence before he decides to go all in. Trust and honesty are the foundations of a good healthy relationship, after all. “And, uh, I also sell drugs,” he adds, oversimplifying what else he does by a fucking mile.

“Illegal drugs?” Adam asks, no judgment or inflection in his tone as Nigel nods in the affirmative. “Ok, that’s good to know but probably for the best if you don’t tell me a lot of details unless you think they’re important, for plausible deniability. Although it is worth noting that spouses can’t be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law,” he points out. Nigel’s heart flutters in his chest and he smiles widely.

Adam continues down the list. Nigel answers dreamily and listens attentively to every word that falls out of his angel’s mouth. Either he’s the luckiest son of a bitch on the planet or that bullet that grazed past his temple years ago when fucking Gabi ran off with that cunt Charlie actually struck him between the eyes and all of this is one gorgeous fucking fever dream his dying brain concocted during his final breaths, and he knows his imagination isn’t good enough for that, certainly not good enough to conjure up the beautiful man sitting across from him in a little bullshit hipster coffee shop in the middle of fucking California.

Nigel watches his gorgeous new fiancé’s lips as he talks and dreams up ways to make theirs a wedding no one in attendance will ever forget.

Chapter End Notes

Prompts for this collection are still closed for the time being, I just had to play catch-up with one last prompt I didn't get around to before they closed last year. If you're hankering to read more flash ficlets by me in the meantime, you can check out this collection of one-shots written for games and various events on the ACOC server. 🥰

End Notes

The overall work summary changes periodically to reflect whether or not I am taking prompts at the current date. Please check it first if you're thinking about sending one. Thank you!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!